

A  
LONDON FAMILY  
1870—1900

*A Trilogy by*  
*M. Vivian Hughes*



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## CONTENTS

### A LONDON CHILD OF THE SEVENTIES

<i>Preface</i>	2
I. ' <i>A Star Danced</i> '	3
II. <i>Ups and Downs</i>	13
III. <i>Round the Year</i>	21
IV. <i>Sailing near the Wind</i>	30
V. <i>Up to Eleven</i>	41
VI. <i>School-days</i>	54
VII. <i>Sunday</i>	67
VIII. <i>Callers</i>	77
IX. <i>A Long Railway Journey</i>	85
X. <i>Reskadinnick</i>	92
XI. <i>Outdoor Doings</i>	102
XII. <i>Indoor Doings</i>	118
XIII. <i>A Family Club</i>	125
XIV. <i>A Last Christmas</i>	135

### A LONDON GIRL OF THE EIGHTIES

I. <i>An Ordinary Girl, 1881</i>	145
II. <i>Under Law, 1883</i>	162
III. <i>Bright Intervals</i>	182
IV. <i>Under Grace</i>	196
V. <i>Maesta Abeo</i>	218

VI. <i>Breaking Fresh Ground, 1885</i>	235
VII. <i>The Furies Amuse Themselves</i>	253
VIII. <i>My First Post, 1886</i>	272
IX. <i>At Hell's Mouth, 1887</i>	294
X. <i>My Second Post</i>	311
XI. <i>My New People, 1888</i>	321
XII. <i>'A dwfn yw tonnan Dyfi'</i>	343
XIII. <i>Under Roseberry Topping</i>	362
XIV. <i>Easter at Elston, 1890</i>	375

#### A LONDON HOME IN THE NINETIES

I. <i>I Cut the Painter</i>	393
II. <i>A New Venture</i>	407
III. <i>America Calling</i>	427
IV. <i>I Find Robinson Crusoe</i>	442
V. <i>Boston, Mass.</i>	457
VI. <i>Meeting the Sun</i>	469
VII. <i>Peter, Martin, and Jack Work Together</i>	477
VIII. <i>Pisgah</i>	491
IX. <i>Preparations</i>	509
X. <i>Wedding Without Tears</i>	523
XI. <i>Ordinary Struggles</i>	536
XII. <i>Bronwen</i>	555
XIII. <i>Three Sons</i>	576

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MOLLY (1872)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
DYM (1865) } CHARLES (1865) }	<i>Facing p.</i> 16
MY FATHER ( <i>about</i> 1872) } MY MOTHER ( <i>about</i> 1850) }	" 33
BARNHOLT (1872) } TOM (1870) }	" 48
MY MOTHER (1872) } TONY }	" 80
RESKADINNICK	97
GRANDMOTHER VIVIAN } GRANDFATHER VIVIAN }	" 112
No. 1 CANONBURY PARK NORTH CANONBURY TOWER <i>Sketched by Charles for</i> } The Bee, 1877 }	" 129
THE NORTH LONDON COLLEGIATE SCHOOL, 1883	" 176
FRANCES MARY BUSS	193
SOPHIE BRYANT, D.Sc., 1884	209
RUNSWICK BAY, 1886	224
THE VILLAGE BY THE SEA, WITH ITS CHURCH IN AN ATTIC	" 289
ARTHUR	304
ABERDOVEY, WITH BRYNHYFRYD HIGH ON THE HILL	" 369
BUNYAN'S COTTAGE, ELSTOW, 1886	384
THE AUTHOR, 1890	433

CERTIFICATE OF VISIT TO THE CAVE OF THE WINDS	<i>Facing p.</i>	448
QUEBEC IN '93	„	465
PEN AND INK IMPRESSION OF BROADWAY IN '93 BY THE AUTHOR	„	480
YETTA KNITTING AND M'JANE DOING HER BULBS	„	496
AT SAAS-FEE	„	513
CARRYING HAY AT SAAS IM GRUND	„	528
EMMA WITH BRONWEN AND HER DOLL	„	545
SATURDAY AFTERNOON	„	561
THE THREE BOYS IN 1918	„	576

A  
LONDON CHILD  
OF THE  
SEVENTIES

## PREFACE

NONE of the characters in this book are fictitious. The incidents, if not dramatic, are at least genuine memories. Expressions of jollity and enjoyment of life are understatements rather than overstatements. We were just an ordinary, suburban, Victorian family, undistinguished ourselves and unacquainted with distinguished people. It occurred to me to record our doings only because, on looking back, and comparing our lot with that of the children of to-day, we seemed to have been so lucky. In writing them down, however, I have come to realize that luck is at one's own disposal, that 'there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so'. Bring up children in the conviction that they are lucky, and behold they are. But in our case high spirits were perhaps inherited, as my story will show.

DON PEDRO. *In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.*

BEATRICE. *Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care.*

# I

## *'A Star Danced'*

A GIRL with four brothers older than herself is born under a lucky star. To be brought up in London, in the eighteen-seventies, by parents who knew how to laugh at both jokes and disasters, was to be under the influence of Jupiter himself.

This fell to my lot. My early memories run from 1870, when we moved into a big house in Canonbury, until 1879, when my happy childhood was abruptly ended. I hope to show that Victorian children did not have such a dull time as is usually supposed.

It is true that we had few toys, few magazines, few outside entertainments, and few means of getting about. But we got so much out of the few we had, by anticipation, by 'saving up', by exhaustive observation of the shop windows, and by the utmost use of the things we did achieve, that the well-to-do child of to-day can never get the same kind of pleasure. The modern ready-made well-stocked farm-yard, stable, or railway station, after a few days' admiration, asks for nothing but destruction, for there is nothing else to do about it.

For us, a large box of plain bricks was the foundation of all our doings. It served for railway stations, docks, forts, towers, and every kind of house. Another box of bricks, thin and flat with dove-tailed edges, enabled us to build long walls around our cities. Some two dozen soldiers, red for English and blue for French, mostly wounded and disarmed, carried out grand manœuvres on specimens of granite and quartz arranged on the mantelpiece, and were easily mobilized anywhere. A packing-case did for a shop, where goods of all kinds were sold for marbles or shells or foreign stamps. The whole room was occasionally the sea, where a chair turned upside down was

the *Great Eastern*, well and truly launched on the floor, for laying the Atlantic cable. A fat Lemprière's *Dictionary* did for a quay or a transport wagon or an enemy town.

We had several remains of ninepins, and plenty of marbles. I loved the colours of the marbles and furtively collected them. Their relative merits I knew, and how to prize a 'blood alley'; but learn to play I never could, preferring to flick or throw the marble, instead of using the thumb in the masterly way that the boys insisted on.

A new toy was an event. Each one of our well-worn treasures must have made a sensation when it first arrived. One such event is graven on my memory. It was my fifth birthday, and I got up early and ran into my parents' room to be greeted. Laid out on the floor was a large and resplendent horse and cart. The horse was dapple-grey, all prancing and eyeing me in a friendly, willing way. The bright yellow cart, whose new stickiness I can still feel, had a movable back-piece that you could do something with. It would 'take off', and if you moved a wooden pin the cart tipped up; then you said 'gee-up' to the horse and all the goods would fall out. I had seen it done in the street, and promised myself no end of pleasure carting bricks for the boys.

Whether by design or not, we were allowed almost unlimited freedom, to imperil our lives without any sense of fear, and to invent our own amusements. We never had a nurse, or a nursery, or any one to supervise us. Instead of this we were given a room to ourselves—*all* to ourselves. In this matter we were better off than any other children we knew then or have known since. For our parents did the thing thoroughly. They provided a large table, a warm carpet, a fire whenever we liked, a large ottoman for storage and to serve as a window-seat; and left everything else to us. We chose the wall-paper and put what pictures we liked on the walls.

This room, which became a happy memory for us all through our lives, was called the 'study'—perhaps as a hint of its intention. The name added to its dignity without putting, as far as we were concerned, any notion of work into it. As time went



on we did our home lessons in it, but the word 'study' is always associated in my mind with sheer fun.

So greatly was our possession of the study respected that I cannot remember my father or mother ever being in it, except on the occasions when they sat in the stalls during one of our theatrical displays, paying heavily for the privilege and for the programmes.

In one recess of the study there were four shelves, and by common consent each boy had one to himself. On his shelf he displayed his treasures. I remember the awe with which I gazed at my second brother's box of mathematical instruments, with bright compasses fitted into blue velvet grooves, and an ivory ruler that shifted into two for some strange purpose. He also had a big magnifying glass, which I always imagined had to be used when one 'magnified the Lord' in church. Some geological specimens were also displayed, but seemed to me of no use except for building forts.

My third brother, Charles, had quite other tastes. He was all for colour and variety, and one never knew what he would do next. At one time he had a rage for churches, and used to visit all the places of worship in the neighbourhood to see what they did. Then he arranged a cross and candles and flowers on his shelf, and got bits of coloured silk from mother to make the correct liturgical changes, and I thus early learnt to expect purple in Lent, green for Trinity, and so on, and was able to impress many an elder who had 'really never noticed'.

However, the main attraction for us all was the window. Our house stood at the corner of two roads, and our window had a good view down most of the length of one of them—Grange Road, affording us plenty of information of the doings of our neighbours and any passers-by. Up and down there went, much oftener than to-day, the hawkers of various goods, each with an appropriate cry: 'Flowers all a-blowing and a-growing', 'Ornaments for your fire-stove' (unbelievably hideous streamers of coloured paper), 'A pair of fine soles', bird-cages, iron-holders, brooms, brushes, and baskets. The long, wailing cry was a signal for us to crowd on to the ottoman

to watch. Seeing our faces, the hawker would stop, look up eagerly, and hold up his goods. Several times we sent one round to the back-door with the encouraging words 'Mamma would like some.' Then we went to the top of the stairs to listen to the drama below: the hawker telling the housemaid that the Missus said she wanted a bird-cage, pause for journey of inquiry to the Missus, indignant denials, the return, abusive language from the hawker, a slammed door, glee in the study.

My second brother, who liked to talk about 'science', brought out the idea one day that a stone, if you wrapped it in a cloth, wouldn't break glass. We dared him to try it on the window. He said, oh yes, but perhaps it would be better to make it go some distance. We then suggested his trying it on the next-door-but-one's conservatory. I ran down to fetch a stone from the garden, and this was duly tied up in his handkerchief. He had been dared, and from a 'dare' there was no retreat. Whizz it went—crash through the glass roof. At this with one accord we became absorbed in pursuits of a studious nature, and after a bit began to feel that the affair had blown over. But then came a message by the housemaid that Master Vivian was wanted in the dining-room. There sat a frail old lady with mother, who was holding the stone-laden handkerchief, marked with Vivian's full name. Mother was breathing out the direst punishments on him, but the injured one was pleading that she only wanted it not to happen again, and it didn't matter at all, that boys would be boys, bless them, she only wished she had a child of her own, and so on, until poor old Vivian was a mush of contrition.

In one of our amusements we were far ahead of the children of the time. My mother had a hobby, amounting to a passion, for water-colour painting, and she encouraged us in every way to draw and paint. She herself had a very large box of colours, and she gave me a little one made of wood, and a bigger, black-metal one to Charles, who could soon draw and paint far better than she could. She besought us at frequent intervals not to suck the brush. But you could never get a good point without sucking a bit, and since mother laid so much stress on the evil

effects of green (instant death apparently in some cases), we came to think that the other colours were not so bad.

We were rich too in another way, richer, so far as I can observe, than the average children of to-day. Our parents had accumulated a large number of books, which we were allowed to browse in as much as we liked. Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Lamb, George Eliot, Tennyson, Byron, Coleridge, Disraeli, these were not ‘taught’ at school, or set as holiday tasks, but became part of our lives. The elder ones discussed them at table, and quoted from them, till the Micawbers and Becky Sharp and Lamb appeared to my childish mind as some former friends of mother’s, whom I recognized with delight later on when I read the books for myself. Rawdon was my eldest brother’s favourite, and I knew ‘same which I shot Captain Marker’ long before I had the faintest notion of its meaning.

Occasionally the discussions became acrimonious. My eldest brother was one day making disparaging remarks about Tennyson, and my mother, all agitated in defence of her idol, fetched his poems from the shelf, and with a ‘Listen now, children’ began to declaim *Locksley Hall*. When she reached ‘I to herd with narrow foreheads’ she burst out, flinging down the book, ‘What awful rubbish this is!’

That was one of the jolly points about mother—she never minded saying what a fool she had been, was always proud to learn anything from the boys, and never gave us the ‘Grown-up people know best’ reproof.

I suppose there was a fear on my mother’s part that I should be spoilt, for I was two years younger than the youngest boy. To prevent this danger she proclaimed the rule ‘Boys first’. I came last in all distribution of food at table, treats of sweets, and so on. I was expected to wait on the boys, run messages, fetch things left upstairs, and never grumble, let alone refuse. All this I thoroughly enjoyed, because I loved running about, and would often dash up and down stairs just to let off my spirits. Of course mother came in for some severe criticism from relations in this matter, but I have never ceased to thank her for this bit of early training.

The boys never failed to smile their thanks, call me 'good girl', do anything for me that wanted a strong thumb or a long arm, and to bring me home something when they had been out and I was left at home. At one time, for instance, I collected threepenny bits, and Charles walked home one day rather than spend this, his last coin, on a tram, so that he might bring it to me.

I have never been able to decide which brother I liked best, for each had some special attraction for me. All four were absurdly unlike in character and appearance, and yet so close in age and size that no stranger could pick out the eldest.

First came Tom. His name was not the short for anything, although his school authorities, in inscribing a prize, tried to dignify it in Latin by rendering the dative 'Tomato', providing us with a nickname for him at once. Tom always took my part through thick and thin, and would take me into partnership when I lost heavily at *vingt-et-un*. He told me that he had kissed my head when I was only one night old. I found it hard to believe that I had ever been so young. 'You couldn't walk or talk then,' he would say, 'you couldn't even sit up.' 'Oh, Tom,' I would protest, 'I *could* sit up!'

He used to take me on his knee and sing nursery rhymes or scraps from music-hall songs, jerking me up and down all the time. This he called doing the 'Jackley Troop', and I would clamour for it again and again.

My second brother had mother's family name of Vivian. This I could not pronounce in my early days, and turned it into Dymond, which soon became Dym. He was the only one who took kindly to school-work, and devoted himself to mathematics. Reserved almost to being morose at times, he was a bit lonely, and was glad to have me as a confidante. He had a secret love of poetry, and would get me up into the study alone and read aloud to me. He had a marvellously modulated voice, now tender, now thunderous. As I sat on the floor in open-mouthed admiration, he let himself go, moving me to pity over Sir Federigo's falcon, and to great excitement over the poor jester who cried out, 'I am, I *am* the King!'

Sometimes, too, he would show me a real scientific experiment. One day he said, ‘Molly, would you like to see me turn water into wine, like it is in the Bible?’ And he held up two wine-glasses full of water. ‘Now watch,’ he said, as he poured both into a bigger glass. And actually as I looked the water turned into claret. After this I was ready to believe almost anything. But one day he tried my credulity too hard. With quite a straight face he told me that the Earth was always moving. If it had been one of the other boys, I should have enjoyed the joke, and turned it off with an easy laugh, for they were always taking me in over something. But I didn’t expect this from Dym, and his absurdity annoyed me. I can see myself now, in a starched pink frock sticking out all round, and a fat little bare leg with a white sock and shiny black shoe, stamping firmly on the floor and insisting, ‘It doesn’t, it doesn’t!’—as solid in my own conviction as ever Galileo was in his. *Eppur non si muove* was my mental reservation.

My third brother, Charles, was the only clever one among us. He worked hard at music and painting, but at nothing else would he do a stroke that could be avoided. He was clever enough to make the tiniest bit of information do the work of volumes. He would find some remote fact about Zenobia or Savonarola, or some one like that, and then pretend to be shocked at the ignorance of those around him. Of course the family knew him, but his trick carried him far with outsiders. He was known to boast that he had never failed in an examination, while the family knew that he had never been in for one. In our continual arguments Charles always seemed to come out top, and his criticisms were merciless. As for me, I was snubbed continually, especially if I fished for a compliment or showed any symptom of self-pity. If I appeared in a new hat (very rare) Charles would exclaim, ‘Well! of all the . . .’ He often told me how plain I was, and prophesied that I would grow fat like Aunt Polly. But there was rich compensation for all this in the things he would draw for me, the tunes he would play for me to dance, and the long exotic stories he would tell me, in the style of the Arabian Nights, making them

up as he went along. And he was kind in unexpected ways, and when people weren't looking.

Nearest in age to me came Barnholt, and nearest in ideas and pleasant childishness. He had a sneaking interest in my dolls and foolish fancies. Lessons of all kinds were a never-ending burden to him. While Tom was good at Latin, Dym at mathematics, and Charles at music and drawing, poor old Barnholt shone in no direction. He would get me to hear him his 'po'try' and what he called 'me drivtivs'—lists of words to be learnt by heart, all derived from some Latin root. The only poem I can recall is Wordsworth's 'Pet Lamb'. What anguish it cost him to get it right! I don't think he ever got beyond the first verse. What insane master could set such a poem to healthy boys? The others used to tease him about it at meal-times, with invitations to 'Drink, pretty creature, drink'. Chaff, of course, Barnholt enjoyed, as one of the alleviations of home life, but detentions at school—they were the curse.

While anything smelling of school-work was poison to Barnholt, any little job of practical work, any errand, any risky adventure proposed, and he was on the spot. 'I say, Barney, do rope this box for me.' 'You might run and fetch me some stamps.' 'Look here, Barney, *you* go first.' There was no record of a refusal.

For some reason, different in each case perhaps, Barnholt was every one's favourite. In a moment of confidence Dym told me how, long ago, the family had gone for a holiday, leaving Barnholt, a tiny boy, with the servants (for some unknown reason). 'We came back unexpectedly', said Dym, 'and I ran ahead and caught sight of Barney in the window.' Here Dym shuddered as he added, 'His face was such a picture of misery that I have never been able to forget it.'

One reason, common to us all, for loving Barnholt a bit extra came from an incident of his fifth year. Although it happened when I was too young to know anything about it, I heard the story often enough to make the details always clear to me, even to the name of the culprit. This was a girl,

Emma Lazelle, who took the four boys out for a walk one afternoon. I should have been taken too, no doubt, only that perambulators were newfangled things in those days, and we never had one; a baby too big to be carried stayed at home. In due course the party returned to tea, and only then discovered that Barnholt was missing.

'Where did you see him last?' 'Who was he walking with?' 'Where did you go?' 'Why didn't you keep looking round?' Mother rained such questions on Emma's head, without waiting for replies. But when she caught the word 'canal', and realized that Barnholt might have fallen into it, she stopped talking and faced despair. Fortunately my father came home soon, and went at once to the Police Station, assuring mother that the canal was out of the question. He did not elaborate his reasons for this statement, but it acted well. He drew blank at the Police Station, but was told that inquiries would be made.

Mother belonged to that school of thought that hopes to hasten a person's return by watching the road. For three nights and the best part of three days she hardly left the dining-room window which commanded the front gate. Strange to say, even the neighbours whose names we didn't know were interested. The wives saw mother hour after hour in the window, and the husbands talked it over with my father in the train going to the City. It was this kind of primitive S.O.S. that was successful at last, for the police in those days had no efficient means of rapid communication.

On the afternoon of the third day, when mother had begun to lose heart and strength, the gate was pushed open, and a neighbour from the house opposite ran up our path waving her hand excitedly. Mother rushed to the door and heard the words blurted out, 'Your little boy is found.' The watch at the window was now a different business, and presently a policeman appeared leading Barnholt by the hand. The little fellow looked very jolly, and his first words were never forgotten: 'Are those for me?'—as he spied some ripe gooseberries on the table.

It seemed that he had wandered far afield, had been found by a policeman, and could give no information beyond that his name was Barney, his mother's was Mamma, and he lived in the 'black house'. (This was because the next door to us had been newly painted, making ours look dirty.) The police had evidently been kind to him, but all that he was ever able to tell us was that they had given him some bread and butter and a halfpenny. In fact to him the incident had been a pleasant interlude.

As for me, the last of the family, my luck began at birth. Mother often told me of the scene. The doctor said to her, 'I think you have four boys, Mrs. Thomas?' 'Yes, yes . . . and I suppose this is another,' she replied in a resigned tone. 'Well, this is a little girl.' Whereupon my mother jumped up excitedly, crying, 'Let me see her, let me see her!' And it was only by swift appliances on the doctor's part that her life was saved. So from the very first I have never had the feeling of being an 'unwanted female'.



## II

### *Ups and Downs*

A SETTLED income has its attractions possibly, but it can never be the fun of an unsettled one. My father was on the Stock Exchange, and wavered between great affluence and extreme poverty. Neither he nor mother had a saving or economical disposition, but lived happily always, neither elated by wealth nor depressed by the lack of it.

We children were never aware of any money troubles, if such they could be called, for they made little difference to us. At no time were we allowed to spread our butter too thick. If things were going well, my father had no thought of enlarging his establishment or otherwise incurring bothers. His idea was that we should all enjoy ourselves a bit more along the old lines. When a shrinkage came we didn't notice much deprivation, or if we did it was put down to the weather. An oft-repeated family slogan was, 'Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed'. This happy-go-lucky attitude to life may be immoral from one point of view, but I have found it an excellent preparation for the continual uncertainties of my own lot.

An indulgence that mother often permitted herself was a drive in Hyde Park. Not far from us was a 'Jobbing Stable', which provided us with a victoria and a sprucely dressed red-faced old coachman named Henry. He would dash up at 2 o'clock, flicking his whip, and mother and I, all beautifully dressed, would get in, and be driven round among all the other carriages. How dull the saloon cars of to-day seem to me in comparison! Sometimes the Princess of Wales would pass us in the Row. I suppose I looked eager and excited and very young to be there, for once she smiled on me.

Now my father's pleasures took another direction. Not much more than a boy himself (for he married at the age of

twenty-three) he loved cricket and all its social accompaniments. When money was plentiful he would take the boys, and often mother and me as well, in a wagonette to a cricket match, and give us all a big lunch, and invite any cricketers home to supper. Mother had a kind of fixed idea of a spread at home, no matter where we had been, so that we were always glad to get back. I don't think she intended it exactly, but this certainty of a cheerful meal, even when it could not be expensive, on our return home had a subtle influence on us.

When there was no outing possible, we played cricket in our back garden, and broke windows frequently. Each smash was a joy to me, because I loved to watch the glazier at his miraculous job. He always gave me a lump of putty which I made into dolls' cups and saucers, and snakes for Barnholt.

Among the many cricketers coming and going there was one who was so constantly staying with us that I looked on him as a kind of uncle. But we always called him by his full name, Charlie Absalom, so that I thought it was one word. He was a well-known cricketer of the time, and played I think for England against Australia. His travelling-kit was extremely simple, and he used to say that his packing up was done in two movements—gathering up his night-shirt with one hand and aiming it into his portmanteau wherever that happened to be. His jolly face made up for the fierceness of his black beard, which I fancy he cultivated on the model of Grace.

Of course Charlie Absalom played cricket with the boys and me in the back garden, gave me underhands when he bowled and easy catches when he batted (not that I caught them), and broke his due share of windows. I can hear his cheery voice calling out, 'Coosh! there goes another!' Mother never scolded when anything whatever was broken. As she justly remarked, 'People don't break things on purpose, and if you blame them they get nervous, and are more likely to break more.' And she was far too sensible to suppose that you can play cricket properly with half your mind engaged in fearing what the ball may break.

Some of the highest spots of my childhood were those sunny

Saturday afternoons when my father came home early with the word 'Kew' on his lips. Mother would throw aside any other plan, we all got ready in a trice, and trooped off in a body to the station at Canonbury. We did not make for the Gardens, as you might suppose, but always for the walk along the river bank to Richmond. This was wilder than the Gardens, allowing greater freedom of enterprise. Here were giant chestnut-trees, and competition in collecting the nuts. Whenever I pick up one to-day it brings back to me with its glossy lustre those rapturous afternoons. On our left we had glimpses of the Gardens, separated from us by a moat, and on our right ran the river, gay with rowing-boats, and every now and then sending ashore the wash of a pleasure-steamer, making 'real waves'.

After our walk, doubled by our scampering to and fro, we were ready for tea in a Richmond shop, and home again by train, to count our spoils and have endless games of conkers.

Another occasional playground for us was Epping Forest. The whole region was familiar ground to my father and mother, for here they had lived, during one of the depressed financial times, for several years in a tiny cottage, actually within the forest. It bore the charming name of Little Monk-hams, and is now replaced by a row of villas. Little it certainly was, and I have often wondered how we all got in. Here the three youngest of us were born. Mother had a notion that it was improper to consult a doctor until the actual crisis, and Charles, who arrived unexpectedly at Christmas, was all but dead before the doctor could be fetched. The cottage was not only far from other habitations but was of the most primitive kind. Once, in a thunderstorm, the front windows blew out on to the lawn. Mother thought this very funny. But she must have been glad when a stroke of better fortune enabled us to move into the ample house in Canonbury.

An old married servant of ours, a Mrs. Pearce, lived at Theydon Bois, and used to welcome us at her cottage whenever we could come. She regaled us with milk from her own cow, with butter of her own make, and hot scones for tea.

A scamper in the Forest was the chief item in the programme, and on one occasion, still dark in my memory, we all set out in the usual style—the boys and I with Mrs. Pearce's little girl running ahead among the trees, while mother and Mrs. Pearce came on behind at a slow pace. Stopping to gather some grasses I forgot the others, and when I looked up was dismayed to see Charles just disappearing round a turn in the path some way on. I called out and ran as fast as my little legs would carry me, but I was only six years old and had little hope of catching them up. However, I still ran and tried to shout at the same time till I came to a place where the path divided. Which to take? I tried one a little way . . . and then ran back and tried the other. Then I found yet another path. Then I screamed and ran wildly this way and that. But there was dead silence, and on all sides the dark depths of the forest. Then the awful truth dawned on me that I was *lost*. Why are children told the story of the Babes in the Wood? With this in mind, I prepared to die. I lay down and waited for the birds to cover me with leaves. My hopeless misery is as vivid to me as if it had happened yesterday. I don't know how long I lay thus, but it cannot have been more than a quarter of an hour. I had not really strayed far from the main path, and I was soon found. The indescribable joy of hearing mother's voice calling me! I rushed to her, burbling out incoherences, but she never knew, no one ever knew, what it had been like. The glorious old forest is near my home to-day and I love to visit it, but its depths always hold a sinister flavour for me.

During the winter there were few recreations, however well off we might be. We all hated 'parties', because it meant being fixed into best clothes and behaving properly instead of having a good romp. The boys used to go to the theatre and music halls. The latter sounded rather dull, but mother explained that they were not dull, only not very nice. However, it made no difference to me what they were like, since I was never allowed to go even to a theatre. Tom and Charles were our theatre-tasters, and they went to see everything that Irving did. Charles told me the story of *The Bells*, which frightened me a

bit, but I never tired of *Hamlet*, and watching Charles, who was tall and dark and thin, striding about the house in imitation of Irving, with his chin stuck out, bidding me go to a nunnery, or stabbing an imaginary Polonius hiding behind the red dining-room curtains. Bernardo, Francisco, Horatio, what good mouthfuls they made! 'Stand and unfold yourself', I would shout, and 'Get thee to bed, Francisco.' Our old family volume of the Tragedies, with Kenny Meadows's illustrations, still opens at *Hamlet*.

When the mood took us we would push back the dining-room table and act charades. The main point was to appear different from usual, putting on a bonnet of mother's, a pillow to make us fat, my father's top hat or overcoat. When other amusements failed we fell back on games. Mother possessed a marvellous box, replete with everything necessary. It opened out in compartments, revealing chessmen fixed on to holders, draughts, bezique-cards, cribbage-board, dominoes, and packs of ordinary cards. I can't remember when I didn't know how to play chess, not to mention all the other games.

My father liked a rubber of whist, and I was taught to make a fourth in my tenderest years. The scoring, rapidly muttered by my father, was quite beyond me, but I drew a certain comfort from hearing him announce that honours were easy. I dealt with extreme slowness, hugging the pack tightly, dreading the disgrace of a misdeal. The others would sit back and wait with ostentatious patience until I had finished. A few clear rules I clung to, such as 'never revoke', 'third player play his highest'. This was a sore trial to me if I held the ace of trumps. The glory of having it was balanced by the pain of parting with it. What I liked was to hoard my trumps as a surprise for the end. Dym, who had an unaccountable way of knowing what cards I had, used to impress on me that there were only two excuses for not returning your partner's lead—sudden illness, or not having any of the suit. And mother, gazing at the ceiling while I was hesitating, would refer casually to the 'thousand men now driving cabs in London because they wouldn't lead trumps'. So, as you will guess, the glory

of winning a trick was quite wiped out by the misery of having to lead. I did my best to avoid Dym as a partner, owing to his horrible questions at the end: 'My dear child, didn't you *see* my call for trumps?' My father or Tom was the best partner, for he would let bygones be bygones, and had no hopes of improving me.

In spite of these alleviations the London winters were long and dark and cold. Fogs in those days were far worse than the mild affairs we have to-day—far blacker and more solid. The boys liked a frost so as to get some skating in Regent's Park or at Hendon, or even some sliding at Finsbury Park. But I never had the courage to try, and hated the cold. I think mother felt the same, for she used to proclaim as soon as October dawned: 'Now, children, remember, the month after next the days will begin to lengthen.'

And of course lean times were vaguely felt by us all, however much the high spirits of our parents hid them. One day I heard my father say to mother, 'Never mind, Mary, whatever happens you and I are in the same boat—so nothing matters.' I knew then that something must be going wrong, but his words, and the pleasure in mother's face, pushed deep down into me a sense of happy security.

Two incidents during such lean periods caused more merriment than distress. One autumn afternoon a friend dropped in to tea, and, in the teeth of mother's increasing coolness of manner, kept staying on and on. It grew dusk, but still no signs of departure. At last mother announced in firm tones that she was very fond of sitting in the gloaming and watching the lamplighter dodging from side to side. With that she rose markedly, adding that she did not wish to force her friends to engage in such simple pleasures. Whereupon the friend, with a nervous giggle and a 'You are so funny, Mrs. Thomas', reached the door and went, never suspecting that our gas had been cut off by the Company.

At another time of poverty my mother had bought a pair of kippers for supper, to regale my father after the children were in bed. He managed to get some stout to add to the feast.

Just as all was ready who should arrive but Aunt Polly, 'only for a minute, dear'. But the savoury smell was too much for her, and she consented to stay to supper. The nakedness of the land was only too clear to her, but instead of declaring (as poor mother had to) that kippers disagreed with her, she did her good deed by pouring the small remains of the stout into a bottle 'against another time'. Alas, she must needs select the bottle in which was an iron ration of whisky, hoarded by us in case of illness. Among Polly's many shortcomings this particular folly rankled longest in mother's mind.

I suppose it must have been during a lean year, when we were devoid even of servants, that my father would inaugurate some lark. One afternoon he came home early and suggested that it was just the sort of day for making toffee. The boys sprang to the idea, but mother hesitated, as she didn't know quite how to make it. But when my father said that he knew all about it because they had made it at school once, we all followed him in a glad rush to the kitchen. Barnholt was sent to the grocer close by for 'a pound of his worst butter'. All grins, Barnholt flew forth on his errand. The grocer was annoyed at such a request, but, as Barnholt pointed out to him, if he had a best butter he must have a worst. Not seeing the obvious retort to this, he grumblingly served out a pound of something which my father declared to exceed his worst expectations. Meanwhile mother had brought out sugar, and, after much searching of cupboards, some treacle. All was put in a saucepan and Dym was placed to stir it over the fire, while Charles measured out a tablespoonful of vinegar. My part was to get in every one's way and ask why each thing was done. My father's explanation of the vinegar was peculiar, having some strange reference to the Franco-Prussian War. When mother had greased some flat tins the mixture was poured into them, and we had to wait a bit till it was set. I can't remember what it tasted like, but I know we were all in a glorious mess.

Another time it was a Welsh rabbit that my father had a mind for, and a syndicate was again formed for its creation. In this case the Franco-Prussian ingredient was a little beer.

My father did the careful stirring this time, and two of the boys got round his legs making toast. Mother hovered around, shaking her head, prophesying indigestion and the doctor. But she ate her share and wished it had been bigger.

The best of these impromptu feasts was a positive shoal of sprats that my father came home with one evening. 'They're practically alive,' said he, 'and they were almost giving them away in Farringdon Market. Now, Mary, bring out your biggest frying-pan and some dripping, make up the fire, and you boys put the plates to warm. You shall have some fish on them before you know where you are.' And lo, it was so. There was a sizzling and a tossing, and soon the crisp little fish were tumbling on to our outstretched plates, while mother was cutting bread and butter as fast as she could. I have had elegantly dressed sole at a grand dinner, salmon straight from the Dart, trout fresh from a Welsh stream, and perch that I caught myself in a Canadian river, but no fish has ever had the magic quality of those sprats 'given away' in London and cooked by my father.



### III

## *Round the Year*

A FEW definite occasions throughout the year were celebrated whatever our circumstances or whatever the weather.

The earliest of these has now all but died out. February 14th comes and goes unnoticed. But St. Valentine was a reality to us. Why this Christian Martyr should be connected with love affairs no one seems to know. Probably his feast is a survival of a pagan one in spring, like the famous Furry in Cornwall. As children we took full advantage of it, and spent our pocket-money in buying valentines and sending them (always anonymously, that was *de rigueur*) to cousins and friends. The little shops near us, and the stationers in Upper Street, used to fill their windows with the regulation cards. Indeed they were more than cards, for the better ones consisted of shallow cardboard boxes, decorated with paper lace surrounding a coloured device of forget-me-not, or a picture of a boy and girl bowing to one another, with a verse of sentimental nature below. Some contained a present of a pair of gloves or a purse or a tie. All of us 'had a valentine'—a sweetheart of some kind, whose name we kept as a dead secret, and there was much fun trying to guess the senders.

In later years I tried in vain to buy a valentine, even going to Whiteley's for the purpose, and reminding the shop-walker with some acerbity that they called themselves 'universal providers'. Upon this he became facetious and I thought it best to say no more.

The boat race was the most absorbing topic of the spring. For some unknown reason we were all violently Cambridge. So much so that I fancied there was something definitely disgraceful about Oxford. Long before the great day people showed their colours, nearly every horse wore a piece of ribbon,

and little errand-boys came to open blows in the street as to the respective merits of the Universities. When I was pursued by cries of 'Yah! dirty Cambridge!' I felt like planting a blow myself. The journey to the river was a fairly long one, and when the tide obliged the race to be early the boys seemed to get up in the middle of the night. In spite of my intense interest in the race, I never went to see it. I never went to any entertainment, not even to the Agricultural Hall, where the boys used to go continually.

All Fools' day had to be observed at school or outside the house somewhere, for the family was too alert to be taken in. We knew all the time-honoured errands for pigeons' milk, strap-oil, fresh salt, and plaice without spots. Nothing would induce us to move a step to 'come and look' at anything until noon on April 1st. But we enjoyed recounting our triumphs at tea in the evening, and also our defeats, for after all a really clever defeat could be saved up and tried on some one else next year.

None of us, so far as I remember, ever went to the Derby, but the race was a great subject of talk, and my father always got up a family sweepstake. It seemed such a serious occasion that I had a vague idea that it had started in Old Testament times.

Bank holidays were much the same for Londoners as they are now—a day for remaining at home or for getting as far away as possible. In this matter we divided. Mother and I did the one, and my father and the boys the other. They used to start off by an early train, and take one of their colossal walks into the country, or else go fishing in the River Lea. Then off went the servants somewhere (probably to Hampstead Heath) for the entire day. Mother and I stayed at home to enjoy what she called 'the freedom of the wild ass', with no lessons, no proper meals, no duty walks, and above all no chance of callers. As soon as the boys had gone I used to watch for the big wagonettes full of children going off to Chingford or Epping for the day. They used to sing and wave flags, and I waved to them. After this the neighbourhood became sepulchral—'silence like a poultice came to heal the blows of sound'.

Mother must have been very clever in thinking up jolly things to do, for I can never remember feeling dull or out of it when the boys went off anywhere. She had the knack of vicarious enjoyment, and we used to live through what the others were probably doing: 'Now they are having their sandwiches', 'Now I expect they have caught some fish', 'Perhaps Charles has done a sketch'.

After tea it was my cue to watch at the window for the return of the wagonettes. I must say I took a grim pleasure in the peevish tones that came from the tired children, and the scoldings of the mothers, not to mention the lack of song and flag-waving. Our next business was to lay the cloth for supper and make a big spread for the hungry home-comers. At one such evening meal mother exclaimed, 'How well you look, Dym!' The others smiled in a gratified way and spoke of the health-giving properties of country walking. It was not till many days had passed that they told her how Dym had fallen into the river and barely been saved from drowning. He had been taken to an inn, put into a hot bath, rubbed down, wrapped in blankets while his clothes were dried, and given whisky. No wonder, as he was hurried home as fast as possible, that he looked a bit rosy. He had a delicate chest, and had once been at death's door, while we crept about the house, alarmed at the arrival of a second doctor.

Strange as it seems to-day, when excursions are so cheap, a London family often went without any 'summer holiday' at all. There were certainly 'excursion trains', but they meant all that was horrible: long and unearthly hours, packed carriages, queer company, continual shuntings aside and waiting for regular trains to go by, and worst of all the contempt of decent travellers. We had a little rhyme about them which ended:

*Grown old and rusted, the boiler busted  
And smashed the excursion train.*

So for a large family a trip to the sea-side was an expensive affair. In the years when we did not go to Cornwall, therefore we either bore the heat of London or had a fortnight at

Walton-on-the-Naze. It looks very near on the map, but it was quite a business to get there. Liverpool Street was never the easiest of stations to start with, and then we had to change at Colchester. I can still see my mother's anguished face at this junction, as she got us all out, counted our many parcels, went to see if the heavy luggage had been shifted, made repeated inquiries (so as to make sure) as to the right platform, and then packed us all in again for the final lap. As a rule, my father could only get away for week-ends, when he and Charlie Absalom or an uncle would come by steamer.

The cabman at Walton knew us, and the landlady at the lodgings welcomed us, and all the troubles of the journey were quickly forgotten as we rushed to greet the sea. Although the place has now been improved beyond recognition with hotels, restaurants, and new types of boarding-houses, the sea and its attractions are just the same. Buckets and spades are the same pattern and colour, sand-castles and fortifications no grander or stronger than ours, donkeys just as recalcitrant. Indeed, we had one advantage over the children of to-day, for no one had discovered that continual paddling was bad for you, so we were barefoot all the time, in and out of the water, scrambling over breakwaters, fishing for crabs, collecting shells and stones, and screwing our toes into the wriggly sand.

At an ill-starred moment mother decided that I was old enough to bathe like the boys. She selected for her experiment a nice pool beside a long, low rock, discreetly far from the main beach. I was quite excited at the idea of doing something like the boys, consented to be stripped, and paddled boldly forward. Mother thought that all she need do was to carry on with her sewing, and throw me words of encouragement. 'Sit down, darling. Splash about a little. Go a little farther in. Don't mind getting wet all over. It won't hurt you. . . .' But there I stood, not quite knee-deep, fixed, with a safety-first idea. Now mother had no use for obstinacy, and thinking me no more than obstinate she laid aside her sewing with some sharpness, walked along the rock, stooped and seized my readily outstretched hand, at the same time giving me a little

jerk forward and downward into the water. Aware now that my last moments were approaching, I pulled my hardest. Mother's foot slipped, and flop! she went headlong into the pool. Her summer frock, a mass of flounces and ribbons, her beautiful wide hat . . . they hardly bear thinking about. She managed to dress me somehow, to gather up her sewing, and walk back to our lodgings, dripping water all the way, adding greatly to the cheerfulness of the 'front'.

When my father was told of it he said I ought to be punished, 'because a child should be taught to recognize a disaster when it happens'. However, he added, 'You punish her, dear. It will come better from you.' As this was his well-known method of getting out of something he hated doing, they both laughed. The only upshot was that mother was promised a new dress, I had a big hug from my father on the quiet, and my bathing lessons were postponed.

To vary our shore pleasures we used to strike inland, and were in real country at once, for there were no 'respectable' roads and villas surrounding the place. Frinton lane was a lonely walk, almost alarmingly so, with its trees overhead. To me it was the 'shady lane', down which Tom and Jane met their death in the poem from eating 'scarlet berries'. Mother's horror of deadly nightshade was only equalled by her fear of green paint. The mushrooms and blackberries we brought in added pleasantly to our landlady's limited cuisine. Her apple tarts and puddings were really clove confections flavoured with apple.

When the boys were off on some long wet-weather tramp, mother and I stayed in our lodgings. She would sketch something from the window, or else do a bit of necessary sewing. She hated sewing so much that she generally stood to do it. I have inherited both the hatred and the posture, but am still puzzled at the reason for standing. Does it get it over sooner? At home, mother coped in a simple way with the eternal mending required for the family. She hired an extremely old maid to spend every Friday with us. There she sat all day, at a little table in the kitchen window, mending. She would never lend

her scissors, not for a moment, and if I asked her to 'button me up' she would do it very slowly, and say, 'Patience is a virtue.' This sounded like a text, but I believe it was a hideous thought entirely her own.

While the boys were off, and mother busy, I was completely happy with a wooden stool on four legs, padded with red velvet. It was a treasure belonging to the landlady, who brought it out for me specially, with the request that the young gentlemen should not sit on it. Mother, knowing the young gentlemen, hid it always until they were out of the way, and then I had such glory with it that it compensated for my being left at home. It became in turn a table, a bed, a funeral coach, a train, a station, a pirate vessel for stealing mother's brushes or cotton, and oftenest of all it was Bucephalus, on which I careered about the room, conquering country after country. The boys returned all too soon.

Back again in London we had to settle down to a long stretch of 'everydayness'. October is bound to be enjoyable always, but November meant fogs, trees bared before they had time to get red and gold, and perhaps 'doing without a fire' because it was not quite cold enough. The one excitement to be certain of was the Lord Mayor's Show, coinciding with the Prince of Wales's birthday, and a school holiday. Needless to say, I never saw the Show myself. The boys always went, and came home full of their struggles with the crowd and their prowess in elbowing their way to the front. It seemed to me something like the way Cinderella went to the ball, from their description of the coach. They always brought home for me a little book, that opened out to nearly a yard of coloured pictures, displaying all the features of the Show. This was called 'A Penny Panorama of the Lord Mayor's Show', and the name pleased me so much that for days afterwards I would go about the house pretending to be a hawker, crying:

*Buy my Panorama, my penny Panorama,  
My penny Panorama of the Lord Mayor's Show.*

Mere river-side excursions were indulged in at any time, the

steamer trip to Greenwich and back being the usual one. For the boys, of course, not me. All I culled from them was a new chant for my play: 'Ease her, back her, stop her', and the longer instructions: 'When in danger with no room to turn, ease her, stop her, go astern', and 'When you see three lights ahead, port your helm and show your red'.

Nowadays it is difficult to realize that no Christmas preparations were made until the week before the day itself. All our excitement was packed into a short space. The boys were on holiday, and all over the place. Mother was mostly in the kitchen, presiding over mincemeat and puddings. I was set to clean currants, squeeze lemons, and cut up candied peel. Barnholt lent a hand at chopping the suet, but kept making raids on the lumps of sugar tucked away in the candied peel, which he assured me were very hard and nasty in the mincemeat, but had no ill effects on him.

Tom and Dym kept going to Upper Street to get stationery, cards, and presents from the shops. Charles spent his time in painting home-made Christmas cards. Midday dinner was a noisy buzz of comparing notes on the morning's doings, and having a look at what Charles had produced. The afternoons were generally given up to the preparation of our annual play. It fell to Tom to devise the plot, and to Charles, the Bully Bottom of the family, fell nearly everything else. He took the part of the villain or the comic washerwoman, and kept thinking up ideas for improving the parts of the others. He taught me how to act when I wasn't speaking, how to listen with agitation, how to do 'by-play', how to swoon, and once even how to die. Dym was usually the hero, a bit stiff, but always dignified. Barnholt had to be given a part with little to say, because, however willing, he could not be relied on to remember the words, or improvise other ones. He would be a coachman or a footman, or perhaps only the scene-shifter. What he really loved was to be the policeman, coming in at the crisis with a "Ere, what's all this?", pulling out his note-book, wetting his thumb, and taking people's addresses. He knew his stuff for this perfectly, but it wouldn't always fit into melodrama.

Tom, to my great comfort, was prompter, and saved me from many a breakdown when I was swamped with nervousness. I didn't actually forget my words, but I should have done if Tom hadn't stood by smiling at me behind the screen.

Christmas Eve was the day we liked best. The morning was a frenzied rush for last rehearsals, last posting of cards, last buying of presents. My father came home early, laden with parcels. The tea-table was resplendent with bon-bons (crackers), sweets, and surprise cakes with icing on the top and threepenny-bits inside. The usual 'bread and butter first' rule was set aside, and we all ate and talked and laughed to our heart's content.

Then followed the solemn ascent to the study for the play. The boys had borrowed chairs from the bedrooms, and placed them in two rows: the front (stalls) for father, mother, and any aunt, uncle, or visitor who happened to be there, and the back (pit) for the servants, who attended with much gigglement.

Personally I was thankful when this nerve-strain was over, and we all crowded down into the breakfast-parlour. Here, earlier in the day, mother and I had arranged the presents—a little pile for each, and we all fell upon them with delight. We were never fussed up with a Christmas tree or stockings or make-believe about Santa Claus. Perhaps we were too hard-headed. Perhaps mother considered that waking up in the small hours to look at stockings was a bad beginning for an exciting day. As it was, we had nice time before bed for peeping into our new books, and gloating over all the fresh treasures.

Christmas Day itself followed a regular ritual. Service at St. Paul's was exactly the same as it is now, the same hymns and even the same decorations (knots of red velvet hung on the pillars). The post was the next excitement, and we displayed our cards on the mantelpiece. The traditional dinner of turkey and plum pudding and dessert was followed by a comatose afternoon, during which Barnholt cooked chestnuts incessantly on the bars of the grate, tossing them to us as they were done.

The evening festivities began with the ceremony of punch-making. This was always my father's special job, and he spread



himself over it royally. Quantities of loaf sugar and lemons were assembled, and a very large glass jug. A kettle of water was on the fire. The lemon-juice and sugar were stirred together at the bottom of the jug, then a tumblerful each of rum and brandy were added. Carefully my father then filled the jug with boiling water. Carefully, because once the boiling water smashed the jug, and everything splashed over the dining-room table. He laughed and called for all the ingredients over again. 'We've lost the punch,' said he, 'we needn't also lose a bit of our lives by crying over it.'

## IV

### *Sailing Near the Wind*

‘NOTHING peculiar happened to-day.’ Such is the entry again and again in my first diary, a large ‘Renshaw’ for 1876, presented by my father, filled with anxious care, and preserved even till to-day. The main ‘care’ was that events being so few I was driven to record even the fact of going to bed. My outside amusements were mainly pale reflections of what the boys told me about theirs. The Agricultural Hall was within easy reach of us, and I wondered what the boys found so attractive in a place with such a name. Of course I was never allowed to go there myself, but gathered that it was not all concerned with farming and cattle and pigs. At one time a man named Weston used to walk round and round the Hall to see how long he could keep it up. This seemed to me a foolish game, but the boys liked to watch him, especially when he had ten minutes’ rest, and fell asleep in the arms of his attendants.

Far more exciting to me were the accounts the boys brought home from the Polytechnic. The name had a gayer sound, and here there was a Diving-Bell. You went into a little room inside a big bell, and were let down into water. So they said, but of course I didn’t believe it. However, it sounded a delightful take-in, and I used to shout about the house, ‘This way for the Diving-Bell.’ Dym took the trouble to show me, with the aid of a tumbler, a rag, and a pail of water, how the diving-bell worked. I was amazed, but still unbelieving that people would trust themselves to go under water just because a rag in a tumbler managed somehow to keep dry.

Strange as it seems I was never taken to anything more exciting than a picture gallery, not even to a pantomime at Christmas. Not even to the Tower or the Crystal Palace or Madame Tussaud’s—places to which the boys had to conduct country

cousins, with profuse grumblings. I suppose it was their expressed boredom with such excursions that reconciled me to staying at home. However, whenever there was any game afoot actually in the house or garden I was allowed to join in. Some of these were kept secret, lest they should be labelled 'naughty', but I cannot remember that we were ever punished severely. An occasional putting in the corner for me, and a threatened 'slippering' of the boys by my father if they were too noisy—these were the usual penalties. When one of the boys had really annoyed mother, she would address him, as 'Sir', and send him to have his hair cut. This does not sound so bad as it in fact was. Our only available hairdresser had a strange habit of keeping a customer waiting for a half to three-quarters of an hour. There was nothing to do but stare at a fern and a picture of Cromwell sitting at his daughter's death-bed.

A kind of family 'common law', an unwritten code, seemed to have existed from the beginning of time and was accepted as inevitable by us all. One rule was that one went to bed the moment the word was said, without argument or plea. Another was that one ate up everything on one's plate. Tom once had to finish the mustard which he had too liberally taken, and I can still recall the swelling in my throat as I bolted my last piece of blancmange. Another law was that we must never be rude to servants. Beyond these there was nothing criminal, except perhaps taking mother's scissors for our private ends.

So infrequent were my own punishments that I recall vividly the two occasions when I deserved them and obtained them. One morning I was bored with my lessons, looked round for some little drama, and proclaimed myself thirsty. Already I suppose I had discovered that a mother can require resistance to hunger, but not to thirst. 'Run downstairs then, dear, and ask cook to give you a glass of water.' Down I went, and after a decent delay returned with the report that cook had refused to give it to me. Now, thought I, for some fireworks. Alas! mother didn't even send for the cook or institute inquiries, or appear disturbed at all. She said, 'Write in your diary, "I told a lie to-day".' There was no escaping it, my beautiful diary

had to be thus disfigured, staring at me. And to this day I think the punishment was excessive.

The other disgrace was still more memorable because it was a strain, and the only one, between me and my father. Charles was reading Hans Andersen: I wanted the book, asked for it, fussed for it, and finally broke into tears. This brought my father into the room, and I hoped for the best. But he became dreadfully serious, led me upstairs, and administered a whipping. Then he explained that it is as bad for a girl to cry for what she wants as for a boy to plant a blow. I might cry a very little if I was badly hurt, but never, never must I cry just to get something.

Adventures of a kind that were not forbidden mainly because mother didn't know about them were plentiful enough, and usually carried out in the back garden. One boy would dare another to some perilous act, while I was a delighted looker-on, half dreading and half hoping for the worst. An acacia-tree stood at the end of the garden. Into this the boys would climb and then swing themselves over into the street—a considerable drop. Another feat was to walk along the top of the high, narrow wall, endowed with bits of glass. The most dangerous of all was climbing round a ledge, some two inches wide, that ran along the house over the area. The boy who attempted this had to flatten himself, spread out his arms, and press his palms against the wall. This particular part of the back premises was invisible from any window, and was therefore chosen when we were 'sailing near the wind', as my father called any near approach to the sinful.

I was merely an onlooker, but was allowed on one occasion to join in an open-air smoking concert in these back premises. Barnholt had been sent out to buy some 'jumbles'—a thin kind of gingerbread about the size of a saucer, so crisp that it curled up. I was given a jumble, a front seat, and (bliss beyond words!) a pipe to put in my mouth. All was in train when who should casually open the back door but mother. . . . I remember that my jumble fell in fragments at my feet and that the rest of the incident was a storm of scolding that I should dare to put

a pipe in my mouth. The crime had only been omitted from the ten commandments because not even Moses could imagine that a little girl should so disgrace herself. And so on. It lasted a long time. But how I did regret not having had one bite of my jumble.

'How I wish I were a boy!' Mother caught me saying this aloud one day, and promptly told me that this was a wicked thought. She did not go on to give a reason, but merely insisted that it was splendid to be a girl, and with such exuberant enthusiasm that I was quite convinced. My father's slogan was that boys should go everywhere and know everything, and that a girl should stay at home and know nothing. Often the boys must have been sorry for me, and one day when I exclaimed, 'How lovely it must be to go on the top of a bus!', Dym first laughed at the idea, and then suddenly said, 'I say, Barney, let's take her.' Barnholt, of course, was only too ready, and I rushed to get my things on before something could happen to stop us. If I had been asked to a royal ball I couldn't have been more excited.

Inside a bus I had often been with mother when we went to Shoolbred's or Peter Robinson's for a morning's shopping. The bus was a box lined with blue velvet, made to carry five each side, of whom mother declared that the fattest always sat next her and half on her, for she was very small. No air got in, except when the door was opened, for the little windows admitted only some so-called light. Straw on the floor, designed to keep our feet warm, was apt to get very wet and dirty. When the bus started the door was firmly shut, the conductor remaining outside with no visible means of support. Presently he would let down the top of the door, put his head in, and ask, 'Any for the Angel?'—or whatever the next stage happened to be. Then fares were handed up to him (no tickets were used), and he made a mark with a stumpy pencil on a yellow sheet. I knew what this sheet was called, because all I could amuse myself with during the journey was to read the directions beseeching the passengers to see that their fares were 'duly registered on the waybill at the door'. We stopped

anywhere, for plenty of passengers rather than rapid progress was the main idea. I reckon that the journey from Islington to the West End took a good deal over an hour. Wedged as we were, it was impossible to see anything out of the tiny windows, and the journey was sheer boredom. What with the lack of air, the jerks of the frequent stops, and the jolting over the stone-paved roads, I was usually too ill to stay the course, and we had to get out some distance before our required shop.

Mysterious as was the mode of attachment of the conductor, the means of getting on to the top was still more so. From the glimpses I had from inside people disappeared bit by bit, their boots last. Of course no woman ever went up. And now, here was I, going to do it myself!

I rushed up again to the study, all dressed, and Dym surveyed me and said I would do. My outdoor clothes in winter never varied: a hat of real sealskin that stood all weathers and could not wear out, neither could it blow off, for it was fastened round my chin by elastic; my warmth was secured by a 'cross-over'—a strip of tartan about two yards long that crossed over in front and fastened behind, leaving my arms free. The worst worry in going out were my boots, which came far above the ankle with endless buttons that needed a hook to do them up.

Dym decided that it would be best for us to walk to the little side street not far away, where the 'Favourite' buses began their journeys. Here we were able to make the ascent at leisure. Dym went up first, then hung down and pointed out the tiny ledges on which I had to put my feet, stretching out his hands to pull me up, while Barnholt fetched up the rear in case I slipped. On the top was what they called the knifeboard—a raised partition along the middle, with seats each side. How people stuck on to them I couldn't imagine. But the boys had better designs: they scrambled down on to the seat in front, by the driver, and got me there too. 'Come along, Missy,' said the driver, who was just settling himself for his journey, and I was safely tucked in between him and Dym, with Barnholt on his other side.

How powerful the horse looked from this point of view,

how jolly to hear the chuckings and whoas, and to see the whip flourished about, but only gently touching the horse. 'I never whips old Rosy,' the driver told me. 'She's been with me six years and knows what I want. I use the whip like chatting to her.' How pitiable were all the people on foot! How contemptible the passengers who went inside! Barnholt, as look-out man, kept calling my attention to things in the shops, and to people doing mysterious jobs in first-floor windows. One room was a nursery, where a boy was riding on a rocking-horse, and in one garden we passed there was a swing with a boy going very high.

We feared to go the whole length of our twopenny ride in case we should be late for tea, so we asked the driver to pull up for us. In my haste to show him how well I could get off by jumping down to Dym in front I fell right into the muddy street. But no harm was done, and the boys picked me up, and we ran home as fast as we could and slipped in at the back door. There was no hiding my mud, and 'Wherever have you been?' cried mother. 'Oh, just for a run with the boys, and I fell.' This was true enough to pass my conscience. Dym was non-plussed, but Barnholt immediately took up the tale of a fine new shop where they sold cricket-bats and bags and things, and how he had thought it better not to spend the shilling Uncle Alfred had given him. On this wave of virtue my muddy dress was forgotten, and we went into tea with no further questions asked.

One morning in the winter holidays I heard a plan being propounded in the study that called for nerve, and promised well. It was one of Charles's bright ideas, and Barnholt would gladly have joined in. 'No,' said Charles, 'you would laugh and spoil all.' 'I promise not to,' pleaded Barnholt, but Charles maintained, and rightly I think, that to know what was going on in Barnholt's head was worse even than his laughter.

So the serious-looking Dym was appealed to, and after much persuasion agreed to come along. Now Charles had discovered the position of four girls' schools in the neighbourhood. He had seen the brass plates with 'Establishment for

Young Ladies'. His idea, so he said, was to call for a prospectus. Dym saw no objection to this, and off they started, but Barnholt and I suspected that Charles had further designs, and we waited for their return with eagerness.

They were a long time away, but returned at last highly satisfied and letting off their suppressed laughter. They told us that at the first school the servant fetched them a prospectus. But Charles looked at it for a moment severely and then asked if he might see the head mistress about a certain point. The servant went away, and Dym was all for fleeing quite quickly, but while he hesitated the servant returned and ushered them into a drawing-room all sofas and cushions, for impressing parents. Again Dym suggested a breakaway. Again he was prevented. In sailed the head mistress all smiles and graciousness, and bade them be seated. With the utmost coolness Charles made a little speech to the effect that Mamma was not very well, and had sent them to inquire whether there would be a vacancy for next term, that they had a little sister, a most promising child, who was about to begin the third declension in Latin, and was of a sweet disposition. Poor Dym nervously made murmurs of agreement in the background, and wrote down name and address at the lady's request on her fine notepaper. Meanwhile the bell had been rung, and cake and currant wine were brought in. Charles became more imaginative under their influence, and the boys departed in the best odour.

At the other three schools they had very much the same experience, except that Dym, by Charles's advice, gave a made-up name and address. The refreshment varied from cake to biscuits and figs, and in the last case the wine was sherry. Perhaps it was as well that this was the last. Barnholt was worried to think of the cake and wine he had missed, but I was greatly set up at being described as promising, although Charles took care to tell me that he didn't mean anything he said.

Unfortunately a week later, when we had forgotten all about the affair, the first head mistress called on mother, who knew nothing of what had happened. She was rather bewildered, and disclaimed having sent any message. 'What is all this, Molly?'



said she to me, as I was trying to be unobserved in a corner. But I never knew anything that the boys did, and looked quite puzzled.

'Your sons are very nice mannered,' said the head mistress, 'but to tell the truth I had the gravest doubts about their message.' Then with laughter and apologies the scene closed in good humour, for mother had the wit to add, 'If ever I do want to send Molly to school I shall know which one to choose.'

In some escapades I was actually useful. November 5th fell one year on a half-holiday. Tom was away at school, Dym was staying at school to play fives, Barnholt for once had no detention, so we three youngest were free for anything. Naturally Charles had an idea. 'Why not make a guy and go round the streets with it? We could disguise ourselves so that nobody would know us . . . do let's.'

Barnholt then suggested that I could be the guy because I was so small. Indeed the boys often used to give me a chair-ride by clasping their own wrists for a seat while I steadied myself on it by putting my arms round their necks. But Charles had seen in the back kitchen an old cane chair without a back, and he thought this would be better. Mother was intending to pay some calls and was safely in her bedroom getting her things on. So we crept downstairs and told the servants what we wanted to do. These servants had been with us simply for ever and joined in any of our larks with enthusiasm. A guy going by was exciting enough to them, but to dress one was a joyous break to a dull afternoon. They found the little chair, sat me in it, and draped the red cotton kitchen tablecloth round me. Meanwhile Barnholt had made paper cocked hats for us all and Charles provided us with black moustaches from the soot of a candle-flame. My plaid cross-over was pinned in a martial style over Barnholt's shoulder, and the housemaid lent Charles her black cape to make him look villainous. As I had my hands free the candle was put in one, and a tin box for contributions in the other. Charles wrote GUNPOWDER on a sheet of note-paper to place behind the tin. At last all was ready, and as soon as we heard mother close the front door

we stole out at the back, staggering up the area steps with difficulty.

Making as quickly as possible for a side street we certainly attracted little attention that would distress us, but neither did we attract the pennies. Charles saw that we needed to make some kind of *noise*, and he started a hymn. This sounded so absurd in the street that Barnholt and I shook with laughing in trying to say that earth hath many a noble city. Well, we knew that laughter would be no use—we must look pathetic if we wanted pennies. Just as we were beginning to feel rather damped we heard the dismal strains of an organ-grinder. ‘The very thing!’ cried Charles, and we wobbled off in the direction of the sound. I can see now the broad grin of the man as he readily consented to our going along with him. Soon another brain-wave came over Charles, and he asked the man to help carry the chair while he himself had a try at grinding the organ. Of course Barnholt wanted to try too, and the man said they might take it in turns.

Then indeed success began. ‘Tommy make room for your uncle’ had new interest. Jaded hearers were astonished to find the well-known air first rendered by Charles as a funeral march, and then by Barnholt as a mad gallop. Windows were thrown open, and amid cries of ‘poor little souls’ pennies and halfpennies came hurtling down. I was placed on the ground while the coins were gathered up, and my tin box began to fill. After some of this triumphant proceeding, the organ-grinder became aware that we had only gone through two streets. He said he must get along faster, as he had to do his ‘round’. This was a new idea to me, that he had a round like a milkman. But when I came to think of it I remembered that on regular days and at regular hours an organ-grinder would be heard in our road. People looked to see him, he said, and it would never do to disappoint them.

We had some trouble to get him to take the box of money. ‘No, take it home to your por ma,’ said he, and we had to explain that it was only a lark, and that ‘por ma’ wouldn’t like it at all. So we settled matters by taking a penny each, which

we turned into acid drops at a little shop at the corner. Fortunately it was now getting dusk, and we hoped to slip home without being seen by any one who knew us. As luck would have it we came full tilt on mother at the gate. She was so glad, however, to get home after a solid hour's calling ('aching behind the ears with being polite', as she described it) that she only laughed at our appearance and said, 'You naughty children, go and wash at once.' We were sensible enough not to mention the episode of the organ-grinder and the moneys received, let alone that the vicar had met us and dropped a whole sixpence into the box. We suspected that he recognized us, but he played the game and kept very grave.

Coloured paper decorations could not be bought in those days, but we used to make our own festoons by cutting alternate slits in a long strip of paper and pulling it out. One day I found Barnholt busy doing this, and fastening his festoons right across the study from corner to corner of the ceiling. He would not tell me what they were for, and was so darkly mysterious that my curiosity was whetted, especially as he hinted that he was to set fire to the paper at some great moment. On the floor I noticed that our specimens of Cornish stone had been piled on an upturned box. As soon as tea was over the boys hurried up to the study 'to do their work'. Knowing that something was afoot I followed them, but only after a decent interval so as to allay suspicion.

As I drew near to the study door I heard mournful strains of solemn chanting. I smelt something strong and strange, that I knew afterwards to be incense. In great fear I listened, and presently there were horrid cries as of some one in pain. Opening the door a few inches I caught sight of a dark room, lit only by a fire burning on the stones, three candles, and the festoons of paper which were waving half-burnt from above. I was too terrified to speak to the boys, who were stalking round the fire clothed in sheets, and waving their arms about. Suddenly Charles caught sight of me, pushed me back, and shut the door with the words, 'You mustn't come in. We are having druidical sacrifices and you'll tell.'

With bitter cries of 'I won't tell, oh, do let me in!' I had to go away and swallow my disappointment, sitting disconsolate on the stairs in the dark. Few things in life have given me such a sense of injury. Not only was I denied the fearful enjoyment of the human sacrifice, but I had been accused of being likely to *tell*! That was dead against the first law of the family. I don't think Charles really meant this. What he feared was my discovery that he had taken my big wax doll for the human victim. When I reached the door it must have been then melting on the altar. As if I should have minded! What was a doll in comparison to the treat that I had missed!

On coming downstairs I was greeted by mother's usual 'Well, dear, I suppose the boys are too hard at work to want you in the study?' 'Yes, mother,' I said, 'they are doing something out of Roman history.'

## *Up to Eleven*

I'm six years old this very day,  
And I can write and read,  
And not to have my own way  
Is very hard indeed.

THE boys had the advantage of me in going about, but I had the advantage of them in not being sent to school. Until my eleventh year I was saved from the stupefying influence of such a place. Mother undertook all that she thought necessary for me, and was very liberal-minded about it. There was no nonsense about a time-table, but a good morning's work was carried out. Breakfast over, my father seen off to the City and the boys to school, mother would 'go round the house'. This ritual involved such duties as putting out sheets, counting the wash, ordering the dinner, arranging which of the tradesmen was to be blamed for something.

Then mother would summon me to her side and open an enormous Bible. It was invariably at the Old Testament, and I had to read aloud the strange doings of the Patriarchs. No comments were made, religious or otherwise, my questions were fobbed off by references to those 'old times' or to 'bad translations', and occasionally mother's pencil, with which she guided me to the words, would travel rapidly over several verses, and I heard a muttered 'never mind about that'.

After the reading, every word of one verse had to be parsed. Very soon I learnt the queer power of the preposition, for in such a phrase as 'the word of the Lord' I was never allowed to say that 'Lord' was in the objective, because it involved adding that it was governed by the preposition 'of', and it was irreverent to say that the Lord was governed by anything at all. At the same time I knew that He *was* in the objective, and that 'of' had done it.

After this effort mother usually gave herself up to her hobby

of water-colour painting, seated at the end of the dining-room table, while I carried on by myself with a little reading, sewing, writing, or learning by heart, in the offing. Every now and again I would come to the surface with a question about the meaning of a word, or a bit of hemming that needed pressing down, or a piece of French poetry to be 'heard'. As for English poetry, it needed no hearing, because I declaimed it about the house, but the French had to be rendered carefully, with poise and a touch of *éclat*. I can still repeat 'Le rat de ville et le rat des champs' from the drilling of those early days.

My English history was derived from a little book in small print that dealt with the characters of the kings at some length. I learnt how one was ruthless alike to friend and foe, and how another was so weak that the sceptre fell from his nerveless grasp. I seemed to see it falling. The book had no doubts or evidence or sources, but gave all the proper anecdotes about cakes, the peaches and new ale, never smiling again, the turbulent priest, and the lighted candle. I am glad that I had these at the credulous stage, and in this unhesitating form. They were much more glowing than if they had been introduced by the chilling words 'it is said that'. I never read beyond Queen Elizabeth, and was really shocked when mother told me one day that a king had his head cut off. I rained questions on her: Who did it? Why? What had he done? Why did they let them do it?

Not as a lesson, but for sheer pleasure, did I browse in *A Child's History of Rome*, a book full of good stories that spared none of the details about Regulus in the barrel, the death of Gracchus, Marius in the pond, and Sulla's cold-blooded slaughters.

The home boasted an enormous atlas almost as big as the hearthrug, that I could only cope with when it was laid out on the floor. From this I culled a good deal, but all I can recall of my little geography book is the opening sentence, 'The Earth is an oblate spheroid', and the statement that there are seven, or five, oceans. I never could remember which, but knew it was an odd number.

For scientific notions I had Dr. Brewer's *Guide to Science*, in the form of a catechism. The author was a Trinity Hall man, who must have made a wide appeal, for my copy (dated 1869) is of the twenty-sixth edition. It opens firmly thus: 'Q. What is heat?', and the *A.* comes pat: 'That which produces the sensation of warmth.' Later on, however, a modern note of doubt creeps in, for we get: 'What is light?' to which the *A.* is 'The *unknown* cause of visibility'. But the field of ignorance is very small. Some of the information is human and kindly. Thus we have: 'Q. What should a fearful person do to be secure in a storm? *A.* Draw his bedstead into the middle of his room, commit himself to the care of God, and go to bed.' To this is added, in very small print, 'No great danger needs really to be apprehended.'

I spoke of sewing, but I never progressed beyond hemming. Endless pocket-handkerchiefs for the boys were cut from the parent roll of linen, turned down at the edges by mother, and hemmed by my hot little hands while the linen was all stiff and shiny. Charles said that I put the needle in one day and took it out the next. But that was an exaggeration.

My dislike of sewing was as nothing compared to my hatred of sums. This was the correct word, for I never did anything but addition. Mother's arithmetic was at the level of the White Queen's, and I believe she was never quite sound about borrowing and paying back, especially if there were a nought or two in the top row. I had a slate on which mother put long lists of figures to be added, enough to keep me quiet for a good long time. But as the sum had been made out of her head she had to check it by working it herself. Next to ready-made pocket-handkerchiefs I think the greatest boon of modern invention would have seemed to her an arithmetic book of easy sums with answers. We certainly possessed a badly printed, delapidated old Colenso's *Arithmetic*. But this was vaguely connected in mother's mind with some one who doubted the creation of the world, and not reliable, or at least not to be encouraged. Often when sums were adumbrated I felt a little headachy, and thought I could manage a little drawing and painting instead.

Obviously there was no hard-and-fast routine in my morning's work, and if the weather turned out tempting, mother would dismiss all idea of lessons and take me out, either for a long walk, or into the West End for some shopping, or by train to Hampstead for a sketching expedition. Such times were the best part of my education, for mother had had a richly varied and adventurous life. The darker parts of it I never knew till long afterwards, but her outlook on life, her opinions on people, and her matured wisdom became a part of me. On our long tramps together, in the intervals of my bowling my hoop, I would induce her to tell me stories. She had to rake her memory for tales from Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Scott, or any novel she had ever read. But what I liked best, and insisted on hearing again and again, was a description of her own doings when she was a girl. Her first school had been at Falmouth, and after that she had gone to a 'finishing' school at Bath.

This was in the reign of William IV, when Bath was the most fashionable pleasure resort of the day. The numbers in the school were limited to six, with as many teachers as pupils. Visiting masters attended for French, music, and philosophy. Mother was frequently given lessons alone. Manners were attended to with special care. When the young ladies were invited out to tea they were set down to a meal of thick bread and butter before starting, in order that their appetites should appear elegant. They were commanded to leave something on their plate, however pleasing the dish. Nevertheless the work in school must have been solid, for mother could speak French fluently, had done a good deal of Latin, had staggered through Locke and Berkeley, and knew as much as could be expected about the movements of the moon and where to look for the various stars as the year went on.

By the way, mother started me in Latin at a very tender age. I can remember dancing round a small table chanting 'mo, 'mas, 'mat, 'mamus, 'matis, 'mant'. My enthusiasm was rather dashed when Tom suggested that I ought to begin the Passive Voice. This seemed to me an unnecessary complication—soldiers could so easily *go* on to the wall, without being *sent* there.



In addition to mother's stories of her school-days she used to describe her amusements in her Cornish home. She was a fine horsewoman, and had tales of giving the men 'a lead' over a high gate in the hunting-field. Balls were rare events, but they were full of go, and evidently not the stately and prim affairs of mid-Victorian times. The day following a ball was the best fun, for it was the practice of all the young men to go round on horseback and call on the girls, to 'ask how they were', and so on. Mother used to smile to herself as she dwelt on this pleasant habit.

Very few girls of her time had travelled as much as mother. Hardly had she left school before she accompanied her father abroad on his mine-prospecting journeys. The most adventurous of these was a tour in Spain. Here the so-called roads were so bad that horseback was the only means of getting about. Mother was frequently in the saddle from early morning till sundown. I thought this was lovely, but she pointed out that one could have enough even of riding. Inns were of the most primitive. One large sleeping-apartment often had to do duty for all the guests. Early one morning, after a night of this kind, the innkeeper tiptoed softly into the room and besought them in whispers to leave quietly and as soon as possible. He told them that a number of *banditti* had got wind of there being rich English people in the place, and were intending to have their money or their lives. He had given them plenty of drink which they were now sleeping off, lying about the door. In a trice mother was ready to start, for of course she had never undressed. True enough, there lay some fifteen of the fiercest-looking ruffians, each with a gleaming knife by his side, but fortunately all snoring. They had purposely disposed themselves so that no one could pass through the outer 'living-room' without treading on them. Mother gathered up her riding-skirt and stepped widely and swiftly, choosing when she could a spot near a knife, so that she could seize it if the man stirred. Rushing to the stable she saddled her horse—a job to which she was well accustomed—and rode off, knowing that her father would manage better with her out of the way.

He soon overtook her, having waited only to repay the sensible innkeeper.

An experience in Christiania was of a different and absurd nature. A visitor in the hotel was a famous chess-player, and was complaining in the lounge that he found it so difficult to get a good game—any one who would stand up to him. Whereupon it was suggested to him that mother could play very well and would keep him busy. At this mother was horrified, but instead of singing low she merely declined rather haughtily, for she thought the man odiously conceited. However, he so begged and implored, and mother's friends so egged her on with 'Do beat him, Mary', in undertones, that she said, 'Very well, then, I will give you just one game, but no more.' Overjoyed, he hurried out the pieces, they sat down, and the friends watched eagerly. Mother fool's-mated him. It was one of those moments that make life worth living. She rose, bowed, and retired from the scene, leaving him a lather of excuses and annoyance—a humbler man.

Such reminiscences were for country walks. A visit to the West End was a different affair. My delight was to walk down Regent Street and gaze in the shop-windows, pointing out all the things I would like to have. And this was as good a piece of education as any other, for I early acquired the Londoner's ability to enjoy things without buying them. For even in our palmiest days mother never dreamt of buying anything she didn't really want. But how we both gazed at and admired exotic fruits, exquisite note-paper, china jugs (a weakness of mother's), and especially drawing-materials with serried rows of paints. One day in Bond Street mother noticed a sailor hat, poised alone in a window. 'How nice and simple! the very thing for you!' she exclaimed, and went in to ask the price. 'Three guineas, Madam.' She nearly fell out of the shop.

A picture gallery was often a reason for our going into the West End. The Turner room at the National was as familiar to me as the dining-room at home, and mother early taught me to regard these pictures as my own property. 'Given to the nation,' she would roll on her tongue as she feasted her eyes on

the *Fighting Téméraire*. Then there were the Dudley and the Grosvenor galleries, wherein enthusiasts were few. Around the solemnly quiet rooms I would march with a catalogue, ticking those I liked, and condemning those that seemed feeble.

On one of these visits to the Grosvenor I spied a white kitten belonging to the cloakroom attendant. Noting my fervour, she offered to give it to me. Mother had no heart to refuse, and home it was taken, in a skewered fish-basket provided by the attendant. That journey home in the bus! The kitten wobbled about, pushing its nose almost through every weak spot in the basket. At every frantic mew there were pained looks from humane passengers, and mutters of 'Crool'. 'What shall we call it, mother?' 'Sir Coutts Lindsey,' was the reply, because he had founded or presided over the Gallery. So Coutty was established with milk and buttered feet, and ruled the mice and us for several years. She must have been a tom, for she never produced any kittens, much to my disappointment.

Taking long walks in the country was the main relaxation in those days when even bicycles, or velocipedes as they were called, were rare enough to be stared at. My father's plan for a half-holiday when no cricket was to be had was usually to go with all the boys to Barnet or Potters Bar by train, and then walk far afield, twenty miles or more, returning dog-tired to a huge supper. Perhaps I was a bit envious of these outings. Whatever the reason, on one memorable day my father borrowed me, all alone, to go for a country walk with him. We started from Hampstead Heath Station as a base, and seemed to go a tremendous distance along lanes and across fields. I seized the chance to ask my father about his school-days. He could remember only two things about his boarding-school: one was that he had a barrel of apples sent him on a birthday, so heavy that it took two men to bring it in. The other memory was that he wrote home when he was twelve to say that he now knew quite enough, and might as well leave school. He laughed, but it seemed to me reasonable enough, for twelve was a big age, and he certainly knew everything. I believed all

he said, and readily imagined that Gog and Magog came down to dinner every day in Guildhall when they heard the clock strike one, and even to this day I feel that guinea-pigs' eyes are not firmly set in their heads.

On this walk we grew very hungry, and then came the top of my pride and happiness, for we went into a little wayside inn with a sanded floor and sat in a parlour with coloured pictures and the sun coming in through a tiny window. Bread and cheese and beer were ordered! Well, if that wasn't being grown up and like the boys, what was? Beer tasted horrible to me as a rule, but this seemed ambrosial.

Barring such occasional jaunts to town or country, my mornings were 'busy', while mother was light-heartedly painting. She said to me one day, 'Molly dear, I feel that I ought to be worrying.' 'What about, mother?' 'Oh, nothing in particular, just worrying.'

The afternoons were my own, and I generally spent them in my own room. Here I was complete monarch. There was no attempt in those days to furnish a room to suit the occupant, and most of mine was taken up by a huge wooden bed and a huge chest of drawers. However, it had a jolly window looking down the street. As it was directly under the study, there was a chance for a postal system from one window to the other. A basket on a string would be let down by one of the boys and dangled in front of me. Pulling it in I would find a letter, asking me to fetch him a pair of scissors or a particular book. This I would find and place in the basket to be hauled up. Letters too of sheer camaraderie were passed to and fro, written on small fancy note-paper and envelopes. Several of these I still possess. The burden of most of them is a hope that I am quite well, but one begs me to take more than eighteenpence when I go to buy his (Barnholt's) birthday present, as 'there are some very fine stamp-albums to be got in the Upper Street for half-a-crown'.

As I lay awake in the morning I could see the houses opposite and a good bit of the street. I liked to hear the 'milk' cry of the women who carried the pails on yokes, and the cheery

rat-tat of the postman, but the sweep's long-drawn wail used to fill me with misery when he made his rare rounds. One morning as I lay idly watching the house opposite I had one of the surprises of my life. A broom suddenly shot out of a chimney. I never thought of connecting this fairy-tale event with the sweep, and thought mother's explanation very dull. I ought to have asked my father.

Before I fell asleep at night I watched a room in the house opposite. All was rather vague until they lit up, and then there was glory. They were real people who walked about and talked and did things just like ourselves. But hardly had things begun to hum when some one would go and draw the curtains. This seemed heartless. Although mother had curtains (for respectability, I suppose), she never drew them. 'If people like to look in,' she would say to visitors who remarked on the fact, 'they are quite welcome. I am not engaged in murder or coining, or anything that calls for reserve.'

Long afternoons I spent in my room alone, while the boys were at school. Drawing and painting took most of the time, but there was also the curious occupation of cutting patterns in perforated cardboard, sticking them on a piece of coloured ribbon, and inflicting them on some aunts as a Bible bookmark. I had a boyish contempt for dolls, especially the flaxen-haired blue-eyed type, whose clothes wouldn't take off. These came in handy as an audience, for one of my favourite games was to hang over the foot of my bed, and preach to the counterpane, with a text duly given out twice, in different directions.

I must have done this to break the silence. No London child to-day can realize the quiet of the road on which my window looked. A tradesman's cart, a hawker or a hurdy-gurdy, were the sum total of the usual traffic. Sometimes everything had been so quiet for so long that the sound of a passer-by or of a butcher's pony would take on a distant, unreal tone, as if it were mocking me. This frightened me, and I would break the spell by singing 'The Lass of Richmond Hill'.

Music I made for myself with broken nibs stuck into the edge of my table. The tinkle was cheering, but no tune could

I achieve, although Charles made effective ones on his 'organ' of ribs.

In spite of my contempt for dolls of the usual kind, and my intense hatred of sewing, I took great delight in dressing up the pawns of a very large set of chess-men, discarded by the family. White pawns became Arthur's knights or Greek heroes, as the fancy took me, black ones were pagans or Trojans. Bright bits of velvet and silk were sewn on them by my toiling fingers, and cardboard swords fitted to their sides. The best bits of stuff and passionate care were expended on Sir Lancelot, who slaughtered pagans with easy grace on my washing-stand.

Speaking of the washing-stand reminds me that I made a kind of sundial on it, being, however, quite ignorant of the existence of such a thing. Noticing that the afternoon sun kept shifting all the time from soap-dish to basin, from basin to tooth-glass, I conceived the idea of using it as a clock. Pencil marks were made on the marble top, and 3 o'clock, quarter past three, half-past three, and so on were neatly written beside them. Having no confidence, however, in the sun's behaviour, I would run to the top of the stairs and call out to one of the servants to tell me the time. 'By the right, or by the dining-room, Miss?' 'By the right, please.' And if it came anywhere near agreeing with my clock, Galileo himself can hardly have had a greater thrill.

A feast for the Arthurian Round Table was sometimes planned. The lid of a bonnet-box was placed on the floor, and the pawns arranged round. I would slip into the kitchen when pastry was being made, beg for a little lump, shape it into tiny tarts, twelve, put jam on them, and smuggle them into the oven. When cook declared them done, they were taken upstairs and laid out on dolls' plates. On one such occasion my pride induced me to invite Barnholt to 'come and see' when he came home from school. He could be trusted not to laugh at my banquet. Looking grave and impressed with its grandeur, he proceeded to pop all the tarts into his mouth, because they were too much for the tiny insides of the pawns. 'I have saved

all their lives,' said he, with such solemnity that I was truly grateful to him.

Of course I had a shelf for my books. We were none of us too fond of showing our books to visitors. They didn't really care about them and sometimes would wet their fingers to turn over the pages. My own treasures are nearly all with me still, showing only the honourable marks of age and continual reading—no thumb-marks, no dogs' ears, no loose leaves. *Rosy's Voyage Round the World* was prime favourite. A little girl and three boys go out in a rowing-boat, sight Africa, find Crusoe's island, catch an eel, light a fire to cook it . . . and so on, in such a realistic way that I was as convinced of the extent of their travels as they were themselves. Each adventure had a full-page illustration by Lorenz Frolich. *The Little Gipsy*, also illustrated by him, was the story of an only child who is stolen by gipsies because of her lovely voice, brought up by them, and after terrible adventures becomes a famous singer and finds her parents. *Alice in Wonderland* we all knew practically by heart, and one of the red-letter days of my life was a birthday when I received from my father *Through the Looking-glass*. I got through the morning somehow, and then buried myself in it all the afternoon, my pleasure enhanced by the knowledge that there was a boring visitor downstairs to whom I ought to be making myself agreeable. And it was about chess-men! As I handle the book now I live over again that enchanted afternoon.

The pictures in our books were well drawn, but colour was very rare and highly prized. Just before the Christmas of 1872, mother took me to Oxford Street to do some shopping. Our main object was to buy a birthday present for Charles. I can remember mounting the stairs at Bumpus's amid what seemed to me thousands of books—a land of Canaan indeed. The stairs are still there, and I prefer them to the lift, because they recall that golden day. Mother chose *The Story without an End*. The story itself was an allegory, and was too subtle for us, but it is impossible to describe the endless pleasure given us all by those full-page pictures, whose colours are as fresh

and beautiful to-day as when Charles received them 'on his tenth birthday', as the inscription in mother's hand-writing records.

It was entirely due to its colour that another book became my constant companion. This was an illustrated Scripture text-book, given to me on my seventh birthday, and still preserved. I have never come across another like it. Some of the little pictures are very crude, but most of them, especially such short commands as 'Walk Honestly', 'Fear God', in fancy lettering, with gold and bright-coloured borders, are tasteful enough.

Some of the boys' prizes fell into my keeping, handed to me in disgust. One of these, *The Safe Compass*, afforded me many a joyful hour. It took the gloomiest views as to the fate of the disobedient. But if you left out everything that was in italics, and altered the endings of the plots, the stories were good. The disobedient were gored by bulls, those who laughed at the infirm fell down wells and were crippled for life, busy mockers died in want . . . there was no lack of gripping incident. But sometimes one could improve on the plot. For instance, Joe had a beautiful toy boat. Fritz (ominous name) was jealous and destroyed it privily. Joe planned revenge. Knowing that Fritz passed by every day with a basket of eggs, Joe tied a piece of string across the road, hid in the hedge, and waited for the crash. Traffic along the lane was obviously not congested, but who should happen along in front of Fritz but the good Herbert. Joe called to him to come into the hedge too, and enjoy the disaster. Instead of entering into the spirit of the thing, Herbert went into italics about coals of fire, the string was hauled in, and when Fritz appeared he was kindly invited to tea. Now conversion was all right and proper, but surely it might have come *after* the egg-smash?

Many people of my age must have imbibed their early religious notions from the same book that I did—*The Peep of Day*, for my copy is dated 1872, and is one of the three hundred and forty-seventh thousand. It is very insistent and realistic about hell, and apparently there is only one virtue, obedience to



parents and kind teachers, which leads of itself to a life of bliss 'beyond the sky'. One stanza of verse attracted me greatly :

*Satan is glad—when I am bad,  
And hopes that I—with him shall lie  
In fire and chains—and dreadful pains.*

Whether the rhythm pleased me, or whether I was gratified that such an important person as Satan would actually welcome my company, I can't say, but the idea was more exciting than that of heaven put forth by the author. The stories about Jesus I liked best, and admired Him greatly. What a pity, I thought, that after such a good life He should have told an untruth at the last. This is what I read: 'Jesus just tasted the vinegar, and said, "It is finished."' My idea was that he had been given this horrid stuff to drink, tasted it, and then out of politeness pretended that he had finished it up.

I suppose that like all children I never asked any one about the things that really puzzled me, although I was ready enough to ask questions for the sake of asking. When obliged to sit and be polite listening to a visitor's conversation, I used to break the monotony with an innocent question, always prefaced by the phrase 'What means by?' Thus I would ask, 'What means by poison?' 'What means by lottery?' 'What means by jealous?' Mother would enter into explanations, only too thankful, I fancy, to find something to talk about. But one day she turned upon me, thoroughly exasperated, because I had asked, 'What means by Russia?' It seemed to me quite a promising opening, and I never knew why it suddenly enraged her.

Alone, in my room, I pondered over much. Once I was perturbed more seriously than a grown-up ever imagines. God had very kindly made the world, but suppose the notion had never occurred to Him? Suppose there had never been any God? Suppose there had never been anything at all? I was so devastated by the thought that I had to run about violently up and down stairs to kill the demon.

## VI

### *School-days*

WHILE my brothers were quite small they went to a private school close by, kept by a very tall, thin, severe old Scot, whose notion of the evil in the world was summed up in 'smoking and drinking and going to theaters'. A sound knowledge of grammar seemed to be the chief end of man. Tom was the first to enjoy the excitement of 'going to school'. He came home one day full of the news that there was to be an examination on the morrow.

'Mother, what is an examination?'

'Oh, nothing much, dear. They want to see what you know, and you write it down.'

Alas for definitions, poor little Tom must have spent the intervening time in anxious thought. No sooner was the class provided with paper and pen than he began to write down all he knew. He had got no farther than 'I know that the earth goes round the sun' when the real nature of the business was explained.

After a while the school grew too big for the house, and a room was hired in Canonbury Tower for some of the classes. The boys enjoyed the change of walking through the few yards of street and racing up into the old building. The window overhangs the street in Tudor fashion, and it was here that Barnholt liked to sit. He used to fasten a stone to a piece of string, and let it down on to the hat of a passer-by. If he could pull it up before the bewildered man had discovered him, he scored a point in a game with another boy similarly armed.

What was taught at this school no one quite knew, but every one brought home a prize at the end of the year, even Barnholt, 'for the general work of the class', and when the time came for entering a public school the boys did well enough. Shrewsbury was chosen for Tom, merely, I think,

because it was on the Welsh border and near my father's old home. It was a long journey in those days, and seeing Tom off for the 'half-year' made quite a little stir in the family, while welcoming him home was a grand occasion, calling for a feast, and my 'sitting up'. Things were to be done and seen 'when Tom comes home'. For one of these home-comings I had prepared for weeks by saving up all the pennies that came my way, and hiding them in my bottom drawer, till there was a fair copper mine there. On the day after his return I took Tom solemnly into my room and unveiled the treasure, with the words, 'For you.' To my disappointment he refused to take them—a lesson to me through life never to refuse a gift.

What Tom learnt at Shrewsbury was clear enough—Latin and Greek, with the ancient history and geography pertaining to them. The only English literature that reached him were lines to be put into Latin verse, while Milton was used for punishment. There is a pencil note in his copy of *Paradise Lost*: 'Had to write 500 lines of this for being caught reading *King Lear* in class.' The only modern geography that he knew was the map of Scotland, because this too was chosen as a punishment. Once he tried to avoid having to copy it again by rubbing out the 'T. W.' at the bottom—the initials of the master, 'old Thos. Webster'. But T. W. was too sharp for him. 'Very nice,' said he, 'my dear Thomas, but you neglected to rub out my private mark under the Isle of Rum.' He experienced a flogging, kneeling on the big Bible in the school hall. Once he was within an ace of being expelled for making a snow-storm in a prepster's room by dropping showers of paper through a hole in the ceiling. Moss, the head master, summoned Tom to the dread 'study', and was looking up a train for his immediate departure, when a noble schoolfellow knocked at the door and produced some kind of alibi for Tom. No doubt Moss, not long appointed and hardly more than a boy himself, was glad of any excuse to avoid an expulsion, and no more was done. Gilkes was the only master Tom revered.

Not encouraged by Tom's career, my father chose a day-school for the other three boys, and obtained presentations

to Merchant Taylors'. The entrance examination was no great ordeal. Indeed, there was a legend that you needed only to be able to spell 'separate' and 'parliament', and to know who Jero-boam was. These bits of information were drilled into Barnholt's head when his turn came, and all was well.

At the family tea at five o'clock we heard various bits of school gossip, and the names of the masters were printed on my memory. 'Jala', the short for J. A. L. Airey, the mathematics master, was naturally Dym's chief god. Charles was extraordinarily lucky in having a real artist for his drawing-master, Mr. Fahey, who found in him a pupil after his own heart and managed to shield Charles from the demands of other subjects. Mr. Bamfield, affectionately called 'Bammy', was the classics master and Henri Bué the French master, with Mr. Storr later on.

Although Charles successfully avoided doing anything much beside drawing he never got into trouble. Never observed to laugh himself, he would be the cause of laughter in others, doing some trick and preserving a face of disapproving innocence. Many's the time at home that Barnholt was sent out of the room for unseemly bursts of laughter when it was Charles who had set him off. Once, however, at school Charles was caught red-handed throwing stones impiously at the figure of Sir Thomas White. He defended himself by the curious plea that this was the only thing against which there was no rule. The master, a bit nonplussed, had no ready reply, and while he thought it over Charles faded away.

He came home in high delight one evening, having shone beyond all the others in the French lesson. Some three or four times during the reading of the French play Mr. Storr was reminded of a parallel passage in Horace. Before he could quote it, 'Ah yes, Sir,' chipped in Charles, 'does it not go something like this?'—and neatly, but with becoming hesitation spouted the Latin line. Mr. Storr was delighted, and when this happened twice more, enthusiastic. 'I am very pleased, my boy, that you have such a feeling for literature.' He did not know that Charles was using Tom's copy of the play. Tom

had also been reminded of Horace, and had written the appropriate quotations at the side.

No master seemed to have taught Barnholt anything, and all he brought home was detention-cards. 'Never mind,' mother used to say, 'mark my words, he will be the first to earn his own living.' And she was right.

So much did I hear about the school and the masters that I feel almost an old Taylorian myself (especially since I have had two sons there). On one day every year I seemed to get right inside the life of the boys. The Feast of St. Barnabas has been Speech Day at the school from time immemorial. The weather was always fine, and I was fixed into a pretty summer frock and taken by mother to Charterhouse Square. Here in the great Hall I felt, for a time at least, superior to the boys. For I was ushered to a proper seat, and given a printed programme, while they were all huddled at the back, by the great fireplace. The plays and speeches in French and Latin and Greek and Hebrew gave me plenty of unintelligent excitement. There were definite points for which I could watch. Dym told us that the Members of the Company were provided with a copy of the speeches, with hints where to laugh at the jokes, so that the parents should realize how well they knew their classics. When they laughed, therefore, I knew. Another diversion was to count the number of times that the Head Master, Dr. Baker, would call out 'Sit down, every boy.' Charles had so often imitated the nervous agitation with which these words were uttered that it would have been dull indeed if 'every boy' had been obedient. The next excitement was to see Dym walk up for a prize, always a certainty. One year Charles actually had a prize for Latin—a quite unreadable book, magnificently bound. It stood on our shelves as a monument of what Charles could achieve by sheer humbug. But he always had the head prize for drawing, which once was a colossal paint-box, stocked with all sorts of new shades of colours, probably ordered for him by Mr. Fahey.

Another treat to me was the school song ('Homo plantat'), which I knew so well that I was able to join in, and dazzle

the fat mothers around me by my familiarity with the Latin words. But all feelings of superiority were bowled over by the procession of the Master and Wardens, or whatever they were, of the Merchant Taylors Company, in their robes and chains, with their fur collars and bouquets. The chief one, who had been enthroned, and saluted by each prize-taking boy, looked to me exactly like the Lord God mentioned so often in Genesis.

After the solemnities the fun. To be allowed to see a real classroom, where boys behaved badly, with desks all inky and carved with names, a desk where the master sat, and a notice-board; to run out on the great green, where the masters were swishing about in gowns and hoods, being agreeable to mothers, and where the grand senior boys were still walking about in the stage clothes in which they had been acting—all this was a kind of awful delight.

It is hardly surprising that I cast longing thoughts on going to school myself. So in my twelfth year mother decided to send me to an 'Establishment for Young Ladies' about a mile from home. It must have been to give me some companionship, for I can conceive no other rational motive for the step. Indeed, I have come to think that the main value of school life is to prevent one's getting on too fast in the natural surroundings of home.

My first day is photographed in my memory. Of course I was delirious with excitement, and sped along Highbury New Park as though on air. I was placed in the lowest class with three other little girls of my own age, who were reading aloud the story of Richard Arkwright. I say 'reading', but unless I had had a book I should have understood not a word of their jerky mumblings. Meanwhile I got interested in this barber who outdid his rivals by shaving people for a half-penny, and when my turn came to read I held forth delightedly. Soon there was a whispered consultation with the Authorities, and I was removed then and there into a higher class. Here were three or four big girls. They seemed to me so big as almost to be of the 'aunt' type. But my fear of them soon disappeared, for the sounds coming from them purporting to be French

were even worse than the English reading had been. Again I sailed ahead, and was asked by the teacher if I had been to France. 'No,' said I, 'but my mother has a lot.' (I need hardly say that I soon found it best to fall in with the pronunciation used by the others, much to poor mother's chagrin.)

At lunch-time I was questioned by the girls as to my full name, what my father was, how many brothers I had, and how big a house. After this came instructions for the next day and the acquisition of lovely new exercise-books and a new history book, and then I fled triumphantly home, to find mother waiting for me with the front door open. She embraced me as though I had come from Australia or some great peril, breathed the word 'darling', and no more.

My sense of triumph and complacency was short-lived, for the next day, as you may guess, there was an arithmetic lesson. Absurd as it may seem, it is the cold truth that I had done plenty of shopping and had managed the change, and yet in my twelfth year I had never seen an £ s. d. sum laid out, and had to be told what the symbols stood for. Hill Difficulty was nothing to the task of turning farthings into pence, pence into shillings, and shillings into pounds. Then I was expected to take a halfpenny from a farthing, which seemed the height of absurdity. The other girls went to work with easy assurance, raising the eyebrow a little at my dismay. Worse was in store, for there followed something they called 'mental arithmetic', of which I had never heard. The mistress stood up and gave forth sums from her head, and, without any slate to work them out on, the girls shouted the answers. One kind of sum smacked to me of black magic: 'Twelve articles at fourpence three farthings each, how much altogether?' Hardly were the words out of the teacher's mouth before the answer came. A kind girl next me told me in a hurried whisper to keep the pence and turn the farthings into threepences. But why? And what were the 'articles' that one could buy so quickly? And supposing you only wanted ten?

However, I soon learnt not to ask for explanations, for the explanations were far worse than the original difficulty. For

instance, we had object lessons, one day on a snail, another day on a candle, each time a pleasant surprise. The teacher read them out of a little book. 'How a pin is made' greatly attracted me. I had used pins without ever thinking, and now I suddenly saw that it must need quite an effort to make one. So I attended carefully. Still there were gaps in my grasp of the process, and I went to the mistress in our lunch-interval, and begged her to explain it to me. 'Oh, yes, dear,' said she, and opening her book read aloud to me very slowly and emphatically just what she had said before. 'You see now, don't you, dear?' 'Oh, yes, I see now, thank you,' said I brightly, lest she should read it again.

Similar assertions of perfect understanding were ready after an explanation of the treatment of remainders in short division. Short! Surely the word was used in sarcasm. I always 'did it by long'. No one bothered about method or understanding or anything as long as you got the answer. A kind of sum that gave me immense trouble was this: 'A man has £85 13s. 4½d. To how many children can he give £7 16s. 1¾d.?' Well, I proceeded to dole it out, subtracting and subtracting, until my paper ran short. Even when, after an hour's work, the man was reduced to practically nothing more, I never could be sure of the number of his beneficiaries ticked off on the many bits of paper. One evening at home Dym caught me at this task, and began to laugh.

'Good Lord!' he exclaimed. 'Don't they teach you how to . . . Look here, darling, can you do simple long division?'

'Oh, yes, Dym,' said I hopefully, for that was my long suit.

He breathed something about fractions, but seeing my blank face, showed me how to bring everything to farthings, and then see how many times I could take the little heap from the big heap—by division. ●

'And will the answer be in children?' said I; 'because it's got to be.'

'Of course,' said he. And when I got to school it was right. This incident was a Rosetta Stone, for I at last understood why one had had to do reduction, which had seemed to me a silly waste of time.



Not that time mattered. In school 'time was all withdrawn'. This was brought home to me by a curious experience one dreary morning. I was seated with my school-fellows at a long table, copying again and again 'Alfred Tennyson is a poet', my writing getting steadily worse as the hated statement was repeated. Doubt began—perhaps people had denied that he was a poet? Glancing up at the school clock to see how far off it still was to the lunch-interval at a quarter to eleven, I beheld a miracle. As I looked, the big hand slipped from ten past ten to twenty past! If the sun had done a similar turn in the sky I could not have been more astonished. And it was not an answer to a prayer like Joshua's, though it might well have been. I watched to see what would happen next: the clock resumed its usual duty at twenty past, and nobody noticed anything. We had lunch-time by the clock, and I was too glad of this to point out what I had seen. But thenceforward all clocks for me lost something of their authority. At home we all 'went' by the dining-room clock, which was regularly kept at ten minutes fast, 'to be on the safe side', as mother said. She also confided to me once that it caused visitors to go a little earlier than they otherwise might to catch a train, for she had observed that they never trusted their own watches. I can hear her saying, 'Our clock is most reliable,' which of course was perfectly true.

I have no recollection of any time-table at school, and I rather think that the authorities yielded to clamour oftener than we suspected. But it was usual to do a little Scripture every morning. This consisted in writing out and reciting a verse or two, fortunately without religious comment. One day we were told as a great treat that we might for the following day learn *any* text we like, and recite it as a little surprise.

'I know which I shall choose,' I whispered to my neighbour. Alas! I had been overheard by the lady at the head of the table.

'I fear, Mary dear, that you are being irreverent. I know which text you mean—a very short one.'

I felt disgraced, but when I came to think of it, how did she

guess which one I meant if she hadn't been a bit irreverent herself?

My new history book was *Little Arthur*, which one could read like a delightful story. The general spirit of the author about unpleasant things seemed to be that they happened so long ago that they probably never happened at all. Anyhow, we gained a fair idea of the flow of events and the stories of leading people without boredom. Alongside of this we were drilled in the dates of the kings and queens, and could say them off like the multiplication table, for which I have ever been grateful.

What demon invented 'freehand copies'? And why this name? Anything less free it would be hard to imagine. While Charles was being encouraged to plunge away and paint at Merchant Taylors', we poor girls used to waste the precious hours labelled 'Drawing' in slavishly copying the design of a vase, or a fancy scroll, printed on a card. The only trouble was to get both sides exactly alike. It was 'corrected', rubbed out, improved, and finally 'clear-lined', that is firmly and fiercely drawn over with a freshly sharpened pencil. It might take two hours to complete one of these horrors; then you turned a new page and were given another. Nothing else was done until you got to the top class, where the big girls copied shaded cottages.

By far the best part of those school-days was the play-time, for the other girls were a jolly lot, whose names and faces and peculiarities I remember as though it were yesterday. Our liberal lunch-intervals were spent in games of tip-and-run and rounders in the big garden, from which we came in all hot and panting. And we hatched schemes of small wickednesses, in which I was always made to take the lead, 'because you always look so innocent, Mary, she'll never guess it's you'.

Indeed I could usually put up some plausible talk and keep my countenance, but sometimes my power of self-control was strained. The lady of the object lessons taught us English from a book called *Butter's Spelling*. There were lists of words derived from Latin, with the Latin word at the top. When

she pronounced *miles* as if it were a measure of length, I thought it was some curious conceit of her own, but when in the poetry lesson she spoke of Horatius Cocles as if he were a shell-fish, I exploded into a sudden burst of laughter. 'What do you see that is funny, little Mary?' I blushed and stammered out that the pattern of the wall-paper had suddenly struck me as funny. She looked at it and at me in a puzzled way, but the matter blew over, and no one was any the wiser. Except of course the boys at tea-time, who loved to hear the strange revelations of a girls' school.

Of bosom friends I had none at all, but kept several of my school-fellows in fee. The walk home was long and boring, so I would induce any one 'coming my way' to accompany me, or more often to go out of their way to do so. I would ask them to hold my books 'just while I get my gloves on'. On the principle of the Arabian Nights those gloves were never completely buttoned, while I distracted the attention of the book-carrier with the doings of the boys or with stories about the siege of Troy. My victim would sometimes protest, but generally ended by carrying my books almost to my door, and agitated next day for a similar job if I would go on with the story. For some curious reason my memory always failed me if my arms were cumbered up with books.

One big girl, in a long skirt and with her hair done up, hated me. I had once openly set her right on a horrible pronunciation of a French word, and thenceforth she snubbed me whenever she could. One day I could bear this no longer, and with all my force let fly a blow at her most accessible spot, which annoyed me by its mere size. Holding herself as though in great pain she went straight to the head mistress and lodged a complaint. This turn of events was quite new to me—telling! Whatever would happen next? I was summoned to the drawing-room and told that such a blow might be very serious, might set up a terrible internal disease and cause perchance *death*. Never shall I forget that afternoon and evening. Suppose Louisa Roberts were to die? For me then the gallows. Disgrace and a harrowing end faced me. I had to practise my

music, but what was the good when I had to die so soon? I didn't dare to tell mother, lest she should begin recriminations. I looked longingly at Charles, who would make light of even the Judgement Day, but again dreaded that even he would be horrified at having a murderer for a sister. All through tea-time I could think of nothing but the gallows, and I don't know how I got through the evening and long night. As early as decently possible the next morning I rushed off to school. Racing along Highbury New Park I passed the school and made for the road towards Louisa's house, so that I might know the worst. Expecting to see something in the nature of a funeral, or straw laid down in the street, what was my astonishment at seeing Louisa herself, bouncing along, swinging her books by the strap, red in the face as usual! 'Hullo, Mary, good morning,' says she. 'You're rather early, aren't you?' My relief was so great that I came near giving her another blow for her heartlessness. Probably it is the memory of that dreadful experience that has made me doubtful of the wisdom of 'reasoning' with children instead of giving them a short sharp punishment.

Private animosities were few, but there was always a suppressed war going on between the Scottish girls in the school and the English ones. The head mistress was Scottish herself, and had married a Scot, and of course Scottish pupils were attracted on this account. The glories of their country were thrust upon us in season and out: its scenery was unrivalled, its education marvellous, it had never really been conquered by England, it had given us our kings. . . . We English underdogs used to hold indignation-meetings, raised to fever-pitch one day when we had been told that an Edinburgh medical degree was better than a London one. The daughter of a doctor lost the power of speech on this point. What a pity that we had never heard of the 'inferiority complex'—how we might have scored!

The old Scot was the typical sandy-haired, raw-boned dominie, in long frock coat and skull cap. Scottish education may have been marvellous, but his only method was to make

us learn a great deal of rubbish by heart. Of course the capes and bays, and county towns, of Scotland, England, and Ireland, but we also committed to memory not only the provinces of France, but also the departments, with their chief towns (quite apart from the map). Beautiful maps we certainly drew, all blue round the edges, and decorated with imaginary rivers, which frequently flowed through the mountain-ranges. Scotland was the usual subject of these, varied by the Holy Land, where I thought the rivers were actually of milk and honey.

However, our geography lessons were our greatest treat. So popular did they become, and our clamour for them so intense, that the foolish old man would allow them to absorb a great part of the day. As soon as we had been 'heard' a few facts out of the book the game began—a game as devoid of skill as any I have played. We sat in a semicircle round the desk. The master would then announce the name of some obscure town in the British Isles, known only to its intimates and Bradshaw. Each of us then in turn made a guess at the county. The girl who guessed right went to the top of the class. After a score of guesses had been made the position of the town made no impression at all, but that didn't matter, the amount of bustle and fun was superb. If by good chance a Cornish town was named I was sick with suspense that some girl would guess it before my turn, and I had to preserve a poker face lest my joy should appear. For they all knew I was Cornish.

Where the old fellow came out really strong was in Grammar. It is almost incredible, but we spent a whole term on the first two scenes of *The Tempest*. As soon as we had read round once, or even without reading at all, we began to 'take places' for parsing. This was not such a wild gamble as the geography because we had to be careful. Every single word was parsed fully, and if a girl omitted the gender or person of the commonest noun, or made the slightest slip, she lost her place to the girl who detected it. It became a point of honour to go as fast as we could, and we learnt to parse like the wind, as much as possible in a breath. Thus, 'common - noun - third - person - singular - number - neuter - gender - objective - case - governed

by - the - preposition - of'. It seems absurd to do this with Shakespeare, but it was better than being bored with the learned notes at the end of the play.

The old fellow never laughed, but he had a few jokes that remain with me from their frequent repetition. One referred to the conceit of a young minister of religion who was invited to take Prayers in a school. Turning to the Head, he asked what prayer would be best to say. 'We usually say the Lord's Prayer,' replied the Head, 'but of course, if you know a better one, please use it.' By experience we knew that this was the point where laughter was expected. Another joke also dealt with a young minister. He was praying 'from the bosom', and besought the Lord that his congregation might not be 'like Galileo, who cared for none of these things'.

This joke tickled mother immensely, and she tried it on a visitor, saying airily, 'You see, Mrs. Peatty, in the matter of politics I'm like Galileo. I care for none of these things.' To her dismay, Mrs. Peatty replied quite seriously, 'Oh, quite, so am I.'

'Well, mother,' said the boys, 'now you see what comes of being funny.'

game in the country. In town the points for scoring had to be rather different; thus we had: man carrying baby, 5; three in a hansom, 5; perambulator, 1; cat in a window, 15; ladder, 1; man with a mourning hatband, 5; any one we knew to speak to (very rare), 31, game. I think we must have played this when mother was walking behind, or this game would never have slipped through her rules.

Sometimes mother and I went by tram, but the horse affair was so slow, the waiting for it so long, and the stoppings so frequent, that the walkers reached Aldersgate before we did. Occasionally my father would vary the route home by taking us through the deserted City, free of all traffic, and showing us Austin Friars and funny little passages, till we came to Broad Street and thence back to Canonbury by train.

How cool and vast the cathedral seemed after the dusty streets! We walked with precision to our special seats, for the vergers knew us well. My father had a stall, my brothers sat in a pew beyond the choir, my mother and I sat in the reserved front row under the dome. The cathedral seemed to belong to us, and little took place that escaped the notice of one or other of us.

My back still aches in memory of those long services. Nothing was spared us—the whole of the ‘Dearly beloved’, never an omission of the Litany, always the full ante-Communion Service, involving a sermon of unbelievable length. The seats and kneeling-boards were constructed for grown-ups (and not too comfortable for them), and a child had the greatest difficulty in keeping an upright kneeling position all through the long intoned Litany. We found some alleviations even here. How would the officiating priest take the fence in intoning ‘uncharitableness’? Canon Milman was our delight over this, because he used to quaver forth ‘-table-’ all by itself and leave a long pause of suspense before he could reach the high note of ‘-ness’. After this we looked forward to beating down Satan under our feet, partly because it seemed a nice final thing to do, and partly because it was the half-way mark. Some energetic clergymen put in extra prayers at the end,

even the thanksgiving—always associated with my blackest thoughts.

Like all children I put some kind of workable meaning into the strange Prayer Book phrases. 'The Scripture moveth us in sundry places' must mean that it pokes us in various parts of our body—a spiritual dig in the ribs: 'Come now, own up.'

'Deal not with us after our sins' was surely a foolish request. Mother's indignant refusal to 'deal with' the butcher was her last word of annoyance, and why should we go out of our way to pray for such treatment? Still more idiotic did it seem to pray, 'Neither reward us after our iniquities.' If God was so generously inclined, why prevent him? As for asking him to rule the Church in the right way, that was mere impertinence. Surely he could be trusted to do it rightly!

Curiously enough I did actually seek enlightenment on two difficulties. Walking home with Barnholt I asked him what 'begotten' meant. He wasn't quite sure, but thought it was pretty much the same as 'forgotten'. I was satisfied, and never pushed any farther, concluding that to be the only one 'forgotten' was just one of those odd things that happened to Jesus. The other difficulty was a sin mentioned in the Litany as being a 'deadly' one. On this point I approached mother. In a sudden burst of confidence worthy of Micawber, she told me that she had puzzled over this herself. Enough. Why worry, when even grown-ups didn't know?

On the few occasions that they chanted the Athanasian Creed I suffered much. Not from the Creed itself, which was a change and amused me, but from mother's attitude. She insisted on *sitting* through it in a marked manner, not as though she were feeling a little faint or something, but bolt upright with firmly shut mouth, to show her disapproval. Might Heaven itself send some vague punishment? Or, still worse, would the verger speak to her?

I have wondered since those days why we all took those long walks through dull streets, and endured those long services. Not from pious or educative motives. It must have been simply for the inspiriting music that burst from that



organ and that choir. It was worth all the endurance, even of the Litany. No footling sentimental hymns, but Te Deums, Psalms, Creeds, Introits, and Kyries that intoxicated us. During one boy's solo my father was so excited that his fist came thump down on his neighbour's shoulder. We children knew all the chants, and used often at home to converse loudly to their tunes. We had nicknames for our favourite Creeds. There was the 'trumpet' Creed, with six trumpet-notes on the organ before each section. We could rely on getting this on the great Feast days. Another was called the 'cup of tea' Creed, because the recurring theme was just the same as that of a comic song of the time, running:

*First you take and warm your teapot, let your water boiling be,  
That's a most important secret, and see you do not spare the tea.*

Sermons, of course, were on the endurance side, but had some alleviations. I had a nice long sit down, and as I was always seated close to the pulpit I enjoyed the colours of the marble pillars, and could weave fancies round the Punjaub, a funny name to have on a pulpit. If the preacher grew fierce I looked at the statue of Samveli Johnson, whom I vaguely connected with Sam Weller, and if he were gentle I looked at the one of Howard with his keys, a satisfying face and figure. It is curious that during all those years I never inquired who these people were. The sermons were seldom less than three-quarters of an hour. To the preacher it was the chance of a lifetime. He would never again 'address London'. We got to be a little sorry for him as he went up the steps, conducted by the melancholy-looking vergier who certainly must have given him a gloomy foreboding of his reception by 'London'. He did not know how his voice would carry under the dome, and we took joy in seeing whether he would bawl, or roar like any sucking dove.

During the summer months we had a series of colonial bishops, who told us all they had ever thought in their far-flung places. The only man we ever heard more than once was the Dean, who always preached on the great Feast days,

and let us off with half an hour. The only sermon of his that I recall was a Christmas one, when he besought us to enjoy ourselves, dinner and all, because that was what the Lord would like best. 'A sprig of withered parsley' was the description of Dean Church by some wit of the day. He was a very slight, care-worn-looking man, ending the procession into the service, letting his board hang listlessly from his hand, mounting into his stall with a semi-detached air, as if the whole business was of little concern. For some reason we had boundless respect for him, and liked to hear him read the Gospel, in which the only word he ever emphasized was 'and'. The effect of this, strangely enough, was to give extraordinary dignity to the narrative of the passion.

The sermons were usually stiff with learning and far over our heads. After one on Solomon's vision, I asked Barnholt on the way home whether *he* would have chosen wisdom if he had been Solomon. 'Oh, no,' said he, 'I've got enough of that. I should have asked for a new cricket-bat.' The rest of the walk home was spent in enlarging on the things we might have got from such a golden opportunity.

Dinner-time on Sunday was the occasion for us all to compare notes and criticisms of the voices of canon, minor canon, and preacher, and the shade of ritualism of the stranger. Whether he stood at the north end of the altar, or in the middle—it was a burning question in those days, when clergymen were being imprisoned for Romish practices. We had no feelings in the matter, but we loved to see some one sailing near the wind.

The afternoons hung heavy. It seemed to be always 3 o'clock. All amusements, as well as work, were forbidden. It was a real privation not to be allowed to draw and paint. However, an exception was made in favour of illuminated texts, and we rivalled the old monks in our zeal for copying Scripture, with the same kind of worldly decorations that they devised.

Naturally our main stand-by was reading, but here again our field was limited by mother's notions of what was appropriate for Sunday. *Tom Brown*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Hans Andersen's

*Tales*, and *Pilgrim's Progress* were permitted, but not the *Arabian Nights*, or Walter Scott, or indeed any novel. We had to fall back on bound volumes of *Good Words for the Young*, which were not so bad as the title suggests, and contained plenty of stories. Again and again I turned to something entitled *The Dark Journey*, only to find that it was an account of one's digestion. You may wonder why I did this more than once, but I always hoped that I had been mistaken, and that such a splendid title must mean a good story. No, there was still that forbidding picture of one's insides cut through the middle.

We all liked certain parts of a three-volume story called *Henry Milner*, which purported to be an account of the upbringing of a Christian gentleman. I believe he never did anything wrong, but his school-fellows did, and all their gay activities shone like misdeeds in a pious world.

The Bible proved often more entertaining than the 'good' books. One day when Barnholt was desperate for a new story I recommended Esther as being as good as the *Arabian Nights*. He hung back, however, until I urged the point that God was not mentioned in it. 'No, really?' he cried, seized the Bible, and soon became absorbed in the plot. He and I used to gloat too over the horrors of the Revelation, more than over its brighter passages. One thing puzzled us: when the twenty-four elders had cast down their crowns, what happened next? Did they run and pick them up again to throw them down again, or were new crowns supplied to them?

Religious talk was seldom, if ever, inflicted on us. The question of conscience once arose when mother was reading *Jessica's First Prayer* aloud to Barnholt and me. 'What means by conscience?' said I. 'Surely,' mother replied in rather shocked tones, 'you have heard the voice of God speaking to you, and telling you not to do what is wrong?' Scenting danger, I hastily agreed. 'And you too, Barnholt, of course?' 'No,' said he, 'I've never heard any voice at all.' Mother pressed him, asserting that he *must* have heard it. But he stuck to his point, and how I admired him, and wished I had had

the courage to say the same, because I had never heard anything either.

Sunday newspapers did exist, but were not respectable. How horrified my father was on discovering that the servants had been reading little bits to me out of *Lloyd's Weekly*! He gave me to understand that I must never read it because the small print was so bad for me. Now and again, however, I noticed on a Sunday walk that he bought a paper. For sometimes my father would cut out all church-going and announce, 'Let's go up to Hampstead Heath to see the sun shine.' We never gave him time to change his mind, or mother's conscience a chance to get to work about Sunday travelling, but were soon hustling off with him to the station. Yes, the sun was shining on the heath sure enough, and we scampered about the wild paths that stretch beneath the group of firs by the *Spaniards*. Fifty years have made little difference to that scene. I think the very bench under the trees is the same, but the country lane that led to Highgate has been civilized into villadom and a good run for cars. Down Highgate Hill we ran, always paying our respects to Dick Whittington's stone on the way, took a tram along Holloway, and reached home with the appetites of hunters.

Sometimes when the weather was particularly bad, or we had friends who jibbed at the long way to St. Paul's, we went to a church near by. Like most Londoners, we had no idea as to a parish church, but chose the one we liked best. Needless to say, this was one where the service was not intolerably dull. In fact we chose one that was considered dangerously 'high', where they 'did things'. I heard a neighbour say to mother in awful undertones (so that I should not hear), 'My dear Mrs. Thomas, they *say* he has a confessional.' Liturgical colours on the altar, Byzantine paintings on the walls, Gregorian chants, Communion more than once a month—all pointed to Rome. We children enjoyed this danger-zone and hoped that incense would be started. Charles declared he smelt it one day, but then his imagination always outran fact.

So mumbling and queer was the old vicar's delivery that he

seemed to have hot potatoes in his mouth, and none but his usual congregation could understand him. One of his sermons had a local touch and sticks in my memory. Apparently Ahab, in addition to his ordinary misdoings, had (in some obscure part of the Bible) built himself an ivory palace. This was definitely wrong, and modern men of business who were similarly extravagant would come to a similar bad end. 'You successful merchants, who build unto yourselves your ivory palaces in Highbury New Park. . . .' This puzzled me, because I knew that road from end to end, and had never noticed a house at all resembling an ivory palace. The way to escape the fate of Ahab was to place your offerings 'in the box that you will find at the door'. Charles imitated the vicar so well and so often that the joke lost its edge, but a cousin came to stay with us and supposed him to be exaggerating. When she attended the church with us, however, and the old fellow began his mouthing, she had to go hurriedly into the churchyard to let loose her laughter.

The vicar's wife paid us an occasional call, frightening me with her severity, for she wore the black cloak and hood of a nun. She said that it saved her having to think about a new dress. Mother, full of daring, attacked her one day on the sameness of her husband's sermons. She agreed that they were monotonous, and advised mother to meditate instead of listening. 'That's what I do myself,' she added. She sat in church just like other people, so I longed to ask, 'What means by meditate?', but was too overawed to ask until she had gone. The severe bearing of this man and wife hid, and had perhaps caused, a tragedy. An only child, a son, the apple of their eye, was destined for Holy Orders. But he did something disgraceful—either was seen drunk, or joined the Salvation Army, or married an impossible girl, or something. Mother's common sense might have blown away the trouble, but she had a horror of poking into other people's business unless asked. All we knew was that the boy had been forbidden to come home, and a letter to him was returned to the Post Office marked 'Not known here'. There was something dreadfully final about this,

and when his poor mother told us about it she broke through her stony reserve and sobbed piteously.

There were plenty of other places of worship round the neighbourhood which the boys sampled now and then, for the sake of variety—most of them very low church, or ‘crawling’, as they called it. My father said he didn’t care where they went as long as it wasn’t a ‘schism shop’, by which he meant anything nonconforming. However, when Moody and Sankey were making news everywhere, mother felt a great impulse to see what it was all about. There was a meeting arranged quite near, at the Agricultural Hall I think, and off she went. Her report to the family was that everything was ‘too exposed’, and she had been horribly afraid that Mr. Moody would point his finger at her and ask some intimate question, or invite her to sit on the converts’ bench. So she got away as soon as possible, bringing with her a fat hymn-book. Charles found this most attractive for rendering in his own fashion on the piano, and one day we found ourselves dancing a polka heartily to the tune of ‘Hold the Fort’.

My father’s Sunday efforts weakened towards evening, and after tea he liked to read aloud to us from books that sounded quite well, but afforded some chance of frivolity. Of course Shakespeare is Shakespeare, but we got boisterous joy out of Falstaff and his men in buckram, out of Hotspur’s contempt for Glendower, and Fluellen’s brush with Pistol over the leek. *Ingoldsby Legends* were always in demand, and above all the *Misadventures at Margate*, which we knew almost by heart. I took my cue from the boys and laughed whenever they did, but it was not till much later in life that I perceived the humour of what was read. Never mind, I was led to welcome a joke as though it were a jewel, and the mere habit has made life jollier. One thing over which they laughed did, however, worry me. The closing couplet of the Margate poem was so easy to understand, and so silly. How could any one be so foolish as to ring a bell, have the door answered, and then have nothing to say but that a friend of his was pretty well?

*Pickwick Papers*, by some blessed workings of mother’s con-

science, did not come under the head of novels. They were 'papers'. She herself led the laughter over the long gamekeeper and Bob Sawyer's supper-party. Not sabbatical by any means, but those readings rescued our childhood's Sundays from the grimness that might otherwise have stuck to them. And often my father would read us things that he loved, without a single word of 'explanation'. Of these the *Ancient Mariner* stands out beyond the rest. O happy living things! Why do people murder them by explanations?

## VIII

### *Callers*

LONDONERS have no neighbours. During our fifteen years in the one house we never had the slightest acquaintance with our 'semi-detached', nor with the people round, although we knew several by sight and gave them nicknames. A very few became known to us through the vicar, the school-master, and the doctor.

The doctor himself was a dear. He saw us through all our infectious diseases and coughs, curing most of our ailments more by jollity than physic. He was specially fond of me because, as he frequently said, he had saved my life. I had almost gone with measles, and when hope had practically departed he ordered champagne. I was only six years old, but I remember that champagne, and my father bringing it to me in his shirt-sleeves that hot summer evening. The very word 'champagne', connected as it was with festivity, and my father's face all smiles, put new life into me, and gave me kick enough to pull through. But I took ages to recover, and can remember the excitement of my first day out of bed, wrapped in a shawl and allowed to sit in my window.

Most of our illnesses mother managed by herself. Sir William Gull, whom she had known intimately, told her that he always gave a patient what he asked for, even sherry in high fever if he wanted it, because a man's stomach and appetite were the best guides. On this simple principle we were not pressed to swallow arrowroot and other horrors, but allowed to starve until we called out for something.

So few were our demands on the doctor that he used to pay mother unofficial calls, in the middle of his morning rounds. To cheer himself up, I fancy. These visits were glory for me because they broke into my morning's work and gave me a chance to hear juicier bits than the ordinary visitor provided.



The mysterious undertone would excite me and impress my memory far more than a matter-of-fact style.

'You have no idea, Mrs. Thomas, how many ladies I attend whose only malady is secret bottles.'

'But how do they manage to get the stuff?'

'The grocer supplies it, and puts it down as sugar on the bills.'

'How did you find that out?'

'From a grocer patient.'

'How do you treat them?'

'Well, you see, I have my living to make, and dare not be frank with them. They would be offended and call in some one else.'

Occasionally the bits were perhaps too juicy for me to hear, however guardedly worded, and mother would tell me to run and play. Chagrined, as all children are by this speciously pleasant order, I used to carry out her instructions to the letter. My play consisted in stealing the Doctor's stethoscope from his top-hat in the hall, hiding it, and then sitting at the top of the stairs to await events. Soon would come the dramatic moment—the sound of good-byes, front door opened, seizure of gloves, and then the outcry at the missing stethoscope. 'That naughty Molly at her tricks again!' It was not until mother threatened fearful vengeance that I would run down and retrieve the poor instrument (that was glad of a change, I fancied) from behind the books or under the hearthrug. The doctor would then catch me in his arms and kiss me, thereby encouraging me to future performances. Although his beard prickled me I liked his smell, and I suppose that is why disinfectants are pleasant to me to this day.

One red-letter day he took me on his rounds. No word in the English language can express my feeling of importance. He was very solemn, and I duly lived up to it. Seated in the victoria while he was paying a visit, I was too remote, physically and mentally, to converse with the coachman, so I tried to imagine what was going on inside. When the doctor emerged from one extremely long visit I asked him what was the matter

in there. Gravely he looked at me, and said, 'You must never, never, never ask a doctor what is the matter with a patient.' Silly man, he might have known that even a child can put two and two together. He should have said 'whooping-cough' and passed on. However, it was a valuable bit of professional etiquette that I thus acquired early.

As for the usual female visitors, they seemed to enjoy nothing but worries and grievances, which they poured forth on mother. Sitting in a little chair in the corner I used to amuse myself by listening to the funny sounds of the voices, high or low, now whining, now nervously giggling, but I cannot remember ever to have heard a woman visitor laugh. Sometimes I counted the number of times they said 'yes'. One visitor was grand at this, for every now and again she would let forth a chromatic scale of the word 'yes', starting on a high note and rushing down in a torrent of concession. Some visitors would make no attempt to talk at all unless mother kept hard at it. One day, in the middle of a deadly pause, I broke in brightly with,

'I know what you are thinking, mother.'

Snatching at any straw, mother was unwise enough to invite me to tell.

'You are thinking up what you can possibly say next.'

Startled, mother looked anxiously at the visitor, who fortunately was too stupid to notice anything odd in my remark.

Among the frequenters of the house was a young man named Arthur Collins. Where he came from, or by whom introduced, nobody seemed to know. He cannot have been a friend of the boys. He would look in at all hours and stay endlessly—too shy to go. He had a shock of black hair, a perpetual smile, and nothing whatever to say. Invariably during his visit he held on his knees a paper parcel, which we all knew to be a present for one of us. Never summoning up courage to give it, he would throw it on the front-door mat as he left. You may think how pleasant this must have been. But we all knew that the present would be a cardboard tidy, or bookmark, or box, ornamented with green ribbon—all his

own work. The house was already littered with these gifts, so that we loathed the sight of them, and his mode of delivery involved a letter of thanks from the unlucky recipient.

— He liked to join in any game that was afoot, so long as it was simple, such as dominoes or draughts, but was so good natured that he always let his opponent win. Not that he said so, but we were all aware of it, and could see him making mistakes on purpose. To poor Arthur we owed our disgust with obtrusively unselfish people, and our understanding of mother's oft-repeated maxim: 'Please yourself, your friends will like you the better.'

Dym and Barnholt had gone one day for a long tramp—train to Barnet, thence to St. Albans, and back by Potters Bar. From the outset everything went wrong. They missed the train and had a long wait to begin with. They left their parcel of sandwiches in the rack. The rain, which they laughed at when it began, increased to a steady downpour. The tea at St. Albans, on which they had counted to revive them, was only just warm and very dear. Barnholt lost his last coin, a half-crown, through a hole in his pocket, and Dym had only just enough for their fares home from Potters Bar. On the way they amused themselves with the fun they would get out of telling their misfortunes to the others, and as they neared the house they agreed that it only needed to find Arthur Collins in the study to crown the day. The servant opened the door with the words,

'Mr. Collins is in the study, sir; he has been waiting for you for some time.'

While acquaintances were few, we were richly endowed with relations, mostly aunts and cousins, whose notion of a visit involved far more than a mere hour's chat. Aunt Polly was the worst. We knew her knock, which became a signal for the boys to stampede to the study, and become deep in their work. Exceedingly fat and affectionate, she would envelop me in her embrace, and burst into fulsome flattery as to how I was 'getting on', a 'fine girl', and 'so like dear Helen' (an aunt even fatter than herself). What annoyed mother most was

her habit of turning up about ten minutes before a meal, with loud declarations that she couldn't stop, had only just popped in, and must be off at once. When the meal had been delayed in accordance with this idea, she would catch a savoury smell and rearrange her mind. (As Tom used to remark, 'No *lady* smells roast chicken'.) She would think that perhaps the meal would give her a chance to see the dear boys. After that it seemed abrupt to go, and she would stay to tea, and then wait till my father came home, to see dear Tom. It often ended in his having to see her home, or, worse still, in her being put up for the night. And she revoked at whist. She used to wish that she had ten sons, 'like your wonderful and industrious boys, Mary dear'. We all heartily wished the same, for they would occupy her time completely.

Another aunt, of very different calibre, also lived within visiting range. Instead of flattering the family, she found fault. Her hobbies were correct behaviour and religion. The latter varied from the severest forms of nonconformity to extreme High Church, according to the last friend who had influenced her. The only shade of thought that never attracted her was the Broad Church, 'where, Mary dear, they do not believe in Hell'.

She lost no opportunity of improving our morals, and manners at table, feeling that poor Mary was very lax with those boys. They, needless to say, enjoyed shocking her with their adventures and stories, coloured for her benefit. During one Primitive Methodist period she markedly left behind a little magazine, containing a list of 'persons for whom our prayers are requested'. Charles, always on the scent for the ridiculous, seized the list hopefully, and hooted with delight when he found: 'For a family of four boys and one girl. That they may be led to give up their frivolous mode of life.'

'That's us,' he shouted, and we all crowded round to see ourselves in print, but not in the spirit that Aunt Lizzie had intended.

Among several of her gifts to me was a little book of devotion, called *The Narrow Way*. I tried hard to cope with its

suggestions, but it had no pictures, and endless prayers for every occasion. Let alone grace at meals, you were to say a prayer on hearing a clock strike, on waking up in the night, on receiving bad news, and even on taking medicine. Now medicine was bad enough in itself, and I concluded that no one could really be as good as this book wanted and that it was a fearful waste of time.

On one of my bad days I refused to finish up my rice pudding, was sent from the room, and fled in angry tears to my bedroom. Soon Aunt Lizzie came up to me with the information that 'it says in the Bible that the disobedient are to burn for ever in the Lake of Fire, with idolaters and murderers and liars'. This sounded all too likely, and without questioning the accuracy of her quotation I went back and choked down that rice pudding.

Another distasteful point about this aunt was her regular visit once a week to give Charles and me our music lessons. No child of to-day would believe the long hours we spent practising. I had to hold my hand so flat that a penny would not fall off, and then hammer down finger after finger on the piano. What misery the third finger gave me! Then followed scales and more exercises, and last of all a little 'piece' which I loathed most of all. The only thing I really enjoyed was the chromatic scale, walking down the piano and playing every note, as fast as I could.

In spite of the fun that we made of Aunt Lizzie we were really fond of her, because she never gushed and would do anything for us. And we all knew her tragedy. She had run away to be married, and her husband had turned out a drunken brute with no redeeming attraction. He tortured her to such an extent that she was obliged to flee from lodging to lodging to avoid him, and to make a living for herself by giving music lessons. It is no wonder that she took gloomy views of life, and had such vivid ideas of Hell. Victorian times are supposed to have been so settled and happy and care-free, but my recollections hardly tally with this rosy picture. Surely to-day no woman would endure such humiliations year after year.

But then, of course, Lizzie's extreme piety may have driven her husband to drink and extreme measures.

The unrelieved melancholy of a third aunt must have arisen from a lifelong boredom. Unlike Polly who was an old maid, and Lizzie who was unhappily married and childless, Bessie had a kind husband and three children. But never did she rejoice. A watery smile of politeness was her utmost effort. A tear seemed always about to fall, more depressing than a burst of crying. When the boys had decamped as usual to the study, 'Oh, Mary,' she would say, fixing mother with one eye at a time, and in an undertone as though disclosing a state secret, 'how I wish that I had never married.' Of course I hoped for the worst, and each time imagined that some dark story must lie behind so much misery. But no, mother used to assure me afterwards that there was nothing wrong with her beyond self-pity. It's true that her husband was called Bertie, and my father said he was an awful fool, but beyond these drawbacks there was nothing amiss.

The cousins that came every now and again belonged to that vague area of distant relationship included by the Cornish under the word 'cousin'. They were of all ages, and the more elderly ones had to be addressed as 'Cousin Jane', 'Cousin Henry', and so on. One large family of parents and grown-up offspring used to come to see us in small groups. We had some trouble in keeping their names and peculiarities clear. They never came without the tidings that one of them had passed away, and we were naturally anxious not to ask after his health at their next visit. At last Charles discovered that whereas they always put 'dear' in front of every name, they gave any one who had passed away the extra title of 'poor dear'.

Amid all these lugubrious kinsfolk and acquaintance, mother found her social duties tiresome enough, and liked to have me in the room in order that she might give vent to her feelings afterwards. 'Molly dear,' she would exclaim, 'I must say what I think about Aunt Lizzie, or I shall burst.' Charles enabled us to bear a lot by means of his deadly imitations of every one. But mother, the gayest of mortals, had to rack her

brains to get the conversation away from grievances. She even asked a visitor one day how she managed to have such an effective bustle. The astounding answer was '*The Times*. I find its paper so good, far more satisfactory than the *Daily News*', and putting her hand under her skirt she tore off a piece to show us.

One last acquaintance I must mention—an old lady who was too great an invalid to go out. Mother used to take me now and again to see her. Her name was Mrs. Ayres. She wore a larger cap than the usual kind that middle-aged ladies used to put on when they took their hats off. 'Where is Mr. Ayres?' I asked mother one day, when we got outside. 'There isn't any Mr. Ayres,' she replied, 'and there never was any Mr. Ayres.' After a mysterious pause she added, 'They call her Mrs. Ayres from courtesy, because she is so old.'

Who were 'they'? I pictured people gathering together round a green table and deciding, 'Let's call Miss Ayres Mrs. Ayres.' But to this day I have wondered at what particular moment this decision was made.

## IX

### *A Long Railway Journey*

OUR lack of interest in kinsfolk and acquaintance in London was more than balanced by our enthusiasm for our relations in Cornwall.

Mother's family was not only numerous and well-to-do, but intelligent and jolly. Hardly a year passed but some of us paid them a visit, and occasionally it was all of us. Among, then, the bits of luck in my childhood must be included this plunge from London to the depth of the country.

To us children an important element in this piece of luck was the journey of three hundred miles that it involved. Our parents must have thought otherwise. Had they not been peculiarly care-free by disposition they would never have embarked on the adventure of taking five children all that way in a train of the 'seventies. Coaching days were doubtless bad, but there were inns on the way.

We used to go to bed earlier the day before, not so much to please mother as to bring to-morrow a bit sooner. We got up long before it was necessary, impeding all the sandwich-making and hard-boiling of eggs that was going on. But eat a good breakfast we could not, being 'journey-proud', as our old cook used to express our excited state. Meanwhile the luggage was being assembled in the hall, having its last touches of cording and labels. For weeks I had been packing in my bedroom, and once I presented five large cardboard boxes, wobbly with various belongings. My father ran upstairs to inspect them, and solemnly looking at them said, 'Now, Molly, which of these is really the most important?' Charmed by his business-like manner and by the word 'important', I gladly pointed to one, and consented to leave the others behind.

The next crisis was the fetching of a cab. At 7 o'clock in the morning there was no certainty of getting one quickly, and



we kept rushing to the window until some one shouted, 'Here it comes.' If you saw that cab to-day your anxiety would be as to whether it could possibly stay the course to Paddington. The few 'growlers' still to be seen in the London streets are royal coaches compared with those of the 'seventies. They were like the omnibuses, with the same dingy blue velvet, only much dirtier, and as they were used for taking people to hospitals my father used to call them 'damned fever-boxes'. To us children, no Cinderella's fairy-carriage could have been handsomer than the cab actually at the door. If we were all going my father and the elder boys had to follow in a second cab. Luggage was piled on the top, and we were packed in among rugs, umbrellas, and hand-bags. At last the cabby climbed up to his seat and whipped up the horse. It took an hour or more to jog along from Canonbury to Paddington, but we did reach the enchanted spot at last.

The train was scheduled to start at 9 a.m. and to arrive at Camborne at 9 p.m. This was before the days of the Flying Dutchman, not to mention the Cornishman and the Riviera Express. Even when the Flying Dutchman was begun it had no third class, and was too expensive for the whole family. Luncheon-baskets had not been invented, neither was it possible to reserve seats. In order, therefore, to travel all together in one compartment we had to arrive more than half an hour before the train was to start. There was then the suspense of waiting for it to come in, and my fear that we might not be on the right platform or that the Great Western had forgotten all about it. My father meanwhile was taking the tickets and having the luggage labelled. Never did he hasten his steps or hurry, no matter what the emergency, so that there was the additional fear that he would miss the train. When at last we were all safely in a carriage, he would saunter off to buy a paper, and other people were coming in.

In time everything was settled and we were gliding out, 'with our faces towards Cornwall', as mother used to say. Very little of the view from the windows escaped us, and I was privileged to 'kneel up' and report the latest news to the

company. No sooner had we fairly left London behind, were gathering speed, and had sated ourselves with fields and hedges for a while, than we began to survey our fellow passengers and make friends with them. In the old broad-gauge carriages there were usually six a side, and much courtesy was needed for a long run when there was no escape from one another. Our parents took care to found a family tradition of being good travellers, which was understood to mean that we must not be a nuisance to other people, by crowding the window, talking loudly, moving about, eating before the appointed time (and perhaps being ill) . . . and the evil-doings of children who began to eat sweets before Reading were pointed out.

Where we came out strong in the carriage company at large was in our superior familiarity with the route. We knew all the points of interest to be looked out for. 'We are going to Cornwall.' 'We always go there,' 'We'll show you when it comes.' By such delicate expressions of superiority we managed to conceal our contempt for the poor creatures who 'were only going to Bristol', or some degraded person who had to 'change at Didcot'. What we most liked was a grown-up, preferably a man, who was a complete stranger to the line. A kindly clergyman would listen with apparent fervour to our informative talk about Brunel and the viaducts, or be shown the 'very place that Turner took for his "Rain, Steam and Speed"'. We knew the exact point to get a view of Windsor Castle, and showed it as if it were our own.

Reading, the first stop, was great fun for those on the near side. What more cheering than to see distracted people looking for seats when we were definitely full up? If we had a vacant seat at any stop Charles would suggest that I should be pushed forward, for any one on seeing me, he maintained, would try farther on. Or he would ejaculate, as any one was about to come in, 'No one would think that Barnholt was recovering from measles!' We talk of the confusion of a modern station, but it is orderly peace compared to the rushing about and shouting of those days. The wonder is that we ever moved on again. And yet we didn't dare to leave the carriage, because

at any moment the guard might decide that he had had enough.

Didcot had one definite pleasure. We knew that little boys would be going up and down the platform singing out, 'Banbury cakes! Banbury cakes!' And mother would crane out and buy some, just to encourage the crew.

Next came Swindon—name of sweet assurance. How often mother used to say, 'They *can't* leave Swindon under ten minutes, no matter how late we are.' Considering our early breakfast, or lack of it, the refreshment-room at Swindon was a land of Canaan, and the hot soup all round is still a joyful memory. So hot it was that Dym launched a theory that it was hoped some would be left to serve up for the next train. Those ever-memorable ten minutes were no doubt entirely for the gain of the restaurant and entirely to the detriment of the Great Western, but they were sheer life-savers to long-distance travellers. In later years the railway had to compensate the restaurant for doing away with those ten minutes, to the tune of £50,000. Perhaps a little remorseful, the restaurant proprietors presented a silver model engine to Swindon, to commemorate the transaction, and the little model is known to the railwaymen as 'the £50,000 engine'.

Thus refreshed we were all agog for our next excitement—the Box Tunnel. The railway cuttings grew higher and higher, and at last we rushed with a piercing whistle into the total darkness of 'the longest tunnel in the world'. The oil lamps, and later the gas lamps, were let down from above with much labour only at dusk. There was no thought of lighting up for a tunnel. Old ladies may have been afraid of robbery and murder, but it was a great feature of the day's entertainment to us. By a pre-arranged plan the boys and I rose stealthily and felt our way into one another's places. When the train emerged into the light the elders sustained a turn, or handsomely pretended that they did.

The charm of Bristol was its appearance of being a half-way house. Not that it was so by any means, but it was the elbow-joint in the journey. The muddle and rush were greater even than at Reading, and we were often kept there for some

twenty minutes. Yet we dared not leave the carriage for more than a mere leg-stretch just outside the door. I sucked much pleasure from hanging out at the off-side window, to watch the man tapping the wheels and applying the yellow stuff from his box. Thus I understood what my father meant by calling London butter 'train-oil'.

Some of our company usually left the train at Bristol, so that we had the carriage more or less to ourselves, and could move about more freely. This was specially desirable because there was soon to come a magic moment when a glimpse of the sea was possible, just for the short time when Bridgwater Bay was visible on our right. Then we bowled along the warm sleepy country-side of Somerset, with no excitements beyond fields and cows and tiny villages, mile after mile. This was the strategic point that mother chose for unveiling dinner. A bulging basket had long been eyed as it sat in the rack. Restaurant cars are boons, and luncheon-baskets have their merry surprises, but for food as a species of rapture nothing compares with sandwiches, eggs, pasties, and turnovers, doled out one by one from napkins, when the supply is severely limited. Oranges in summer were unknown then, as well as all the foreign apples and other fruit to be had in London to-day. We had to slake our thirst with acid-drops and a tiny ration of lemonade. If by any chance a fellow passenger remained we always managed to do some little barter of biscuits or sweets, because strange food is even more pleasant than one's own.

We used to hail Exeter as being 'almost there', for it was in Devon, actually the next county to Cornwall, and definitely 'west'. A quiet dignity pervaded its saintly stations, but we could never stay long because of course we were late. A train in those days was never 'on time'. After Exeter we were all keyed up for the greatest treat of the journey. I have travelled in many show places of Europe and America, but have never been along a piece of line to equal the run from Exeter to Teignmouth. We children were not stirred as mother was by the beauties of the estuary and the opposite shore. What we looked out for were the waders carrying on some mysterious

hunt in the water, and two pleasure-boats, shaped like some kind of water-fowl, and called the *Swan* and *Cygnets*. I never dreamt but what they were real birds.

Then, with a magnificent gesture, the Great Western swept us to the sea-side, indeed almost into the sea. Mother remembered a day when the waves had washed into the carriage. The bare possibility of such a thing made this part of the run something of an adventure, and we almost hoped it would happen again.

The sun was always shining at Dawlish, and there was the sea all spread out in dazzling blue. And as if the train knew how to enhance the effect, it would roll in and out of short tunnels in the 'rouge', or red sandstone of Devon. Each time it emerged the sea looked bluer and the rocks more fantastic in shape. However beautiful the inland scenery might be, it seemed dull after this, and after Teignmouth we usually fell asleep. I remember being laid out at length with my head on mother's lap, and the rest being a blank till the glad sound of 'Here's Plymouth' woke me.

By now it was late afternoon, and you would suppose that here at last would be some chance of tea and a wash in comfort. Ah no! The London train didn't care about Cornwall, there were no through carriages arranged for long-distance people, and we had to change into a local affair, with hard wooden seats, and patronized by a succession of market people with large bundles. By the time we had found this train, seen the luggage shifted, carried along our small parcels, and settled into our seats, there was no time to do more than buy a bag of buns. They had not thought then of allowing people to carry cups of tea into the carriage with them.

In all this confusion I had time to notice that we were coming out of Millbay the same way that we had gone in. It was a sort of terminus, apparently, and very mysterious, because I was assured that we were not going back to London. I asked my father what became of the engine that had brought us from London. How did it get out so as to pull the train away again? He explained very carefully how it was lowered into an under-

ground passage, run along under the train, and then hauled up again at the other end. This seemed to me no more peculiar than most things.

Shipping on the Hamoaze amused us mightily enough until we reached the climax of our journey—the Albert Bridge. We were leaving ‘England’ behind and were in the enchanted land of Cornwall at last. We greeted the tiny whitewashed cottages of the ‘natives’ with far greater fervour than we had shown over Windsor Castle. We vied with one another in trying to remember the order in which the stations came. We stopped at all of them. And when I say stopped I mean stopped. There was none of the hurry of Reading or Bristol. We leant out to catch the accents of the porter, proclaiming his piece in the soft west-country drawl. We watched all the greetings and partings and waving of hands of the travellers. . . . Then would descend that peculiar silence of a country station that signifies that every one is settled, and the guard feels that it is safe to let the train start again.

If a sun-bonneted market woman got in with us mother could never resist talking to her, and answering the invariable Cornish question ‘Wheer be ’ee goin’?’ Then would follow the astonished ‘From Lunnon, are ’ee? Aw, my deer!’

And now it was growing dusk, and the familiar tin-mine buildings were silhouetted against the sky, and generally darkness had descended before we ran into Camborne more than an hour late. We had become indescribably dirty and tired and hungry. But our reception atoned for all. Countless uncles and aunts and cousins were crowding the platform, and as we got out every one was exclaiming ‘Here they are!’ We children were the heroes and the spoilt darlings of the hour. We were bundled into waiting carriages and driven to a royal spread. On one such occasion I remember my cousin Edgar running all the mile and a half by the side of the carriage in the dark, giving us a whoop of joy when a gate into a lane had to be opened for us to pass.

## X

### *Reskadinnick*

SUCH was the name of the homestead that was our journey's end. To any but a Cornishman the word sounds strange. London tradespeople made curious play with it, and Peter Robinson once sent a parcel to my aunt addressed: 'Miss Vivian, c/o Rev. Kadinnick.' To us children the name was synonymous with Paradise.

I call it a homestead because it was much more than a mere home or house or farm. When the town was left behind you entered a lane through a gate. This had the alluring name of Blackberry Lane, and meandered between mossy hedges thick with wild flowers until a large white gate barred the way. Beyond this was a quarter of a mile of sweeping drive, bordered by neatly cut grass and tall trees of great variety with more woodland behind them. Here and there was a bright flowering shrub, and in one recessed spot was a deep pond among the trees. A beautiful cool walk on a summer's day, but terrifying at night when one had to come home alone in the dark.

With the last curve of the drive the house came in sight, facing a large lawn, bordered by wooded banks and dotted with huge elms. While the carriage-drive led away through another wood to a lane beyond, a flower-garden lay on the other side of the house. Over a little brook and up a sunny bank there stretched a kitchen garden with fruit-trees innumerable, and in another part was a special orchard.

My grandfather had planned the whole place and planted all the trees except two Scotch firs in the drive, of unknown antiquity. The house too was of his own building, arranged for his bride in the reign of George III.

He had started with a farm and its dwelling-house, with huge old outside chimneys, gables, rafters, and stone floors. The walls were made of anything to be had some two or three

centuries ago—mostly mud and timber. In some alterations made during my time a large trunk of a tree was found embedded in one wall. In some places these walls were two yards thick, and it had been customary to gouge a bit out when a cupboard was wanted.

At the end of this old part he had built a new Georgian house, with pillared front and a brick arch at each side, concealing the back regions. These arches became mellowed in colour and creeper-clad, and gave a pleasant surprise to any one approaching and passing through to the beautiful older buildings beyond.

The connexion of the new house with the old had necessitated some strange staircases and dark corners, and every room seemed to lead into some other room. And it was easy to get on the roof, or jump from a window at almost any point. The delightfully rambling *ensemble* seemed to have been designed by some celestial architect for the sole purpose of playing hide-and-seek. My grandfather had ten children, and no doubt they took as much advantage of this as we grandchildren did.

The out-buildings were even more rambling and mysterious than the interior. Beyond the great dairy there was the hen-yard, surrounded by coops inhabited by hens in every stage of their duty. From this you went into the big yard, with its long row of stables and a granary over them. Beyond this again was the lower yard, where the cows were housed and milked in sheds all round, and where the pigs wallowed about in the middle. By the side of this was the big barn, and beyond that the 'mowey', another yard where the ricks were built up on stone supports to keep the rats away. The little lane led in one direction to the smithy, the horse-pond, and a few scattered cottages, and in the other direction to the water-mill. All round were the various fields belonging to the farm, some with cows, some with sheep, but most of them with corn.

The difficulty on arriving from London was to know where to begin enjoying oneself. I well remember one such evening, being far too excited to sleep, I kept leaping from my bed to the



window-seat, from sheer exuberance. At last I burst one of the panes in pieces. My golden aunt thought this quite a natural thing to do, and 'it saved having to open the window'.

As a regular thing so far as I was concerned the first charge on the estate was a personal visit to every animal. Cats first. These were divided into four distinct classes, and the cats seemed to be as snobbish as humans. The parlour cats were Persians, sat on laps and best chairs, and would never recline in the kitchen, although they would stroll casually about when a savoury smell was prevailing. The kitchen cats seemed to be always having kittens in the fathomless linen-cupboard at the top of the stairs. If they ventured into the dining-room it was to hide under the table in the hope of gain. Orchard cats prowled round the yards and stables, quite self-supporting, never venturing indoors unless under stress of hunger. One of these, a tom called Sarah, was so fierce that I was afraid to stroke him, and threw scraps to him at a distance. Then there were the office cats. The 'office' was a side wing of the old house, where accounts were kept and where the farm-men used to be paid on a Saturday. Behind it was a place called the 'slaughter-house', which I never had the courage to explore; the name put me off. A few cats, lean and humble-minded, managed to exist in this borderland, despised by both parlour and kitchen cats.

The only creature that really frightened me was the turkey-cock. Nothing in my life has ever made me so weak with terror as that horrible gobbling bird. Tired of parading with his harem in the orchard, he would now and again strut in the hen-yard or mowey. He would definitely forbid me to cross a yard if he was in it. If I made a dash to cross it, so would he. . . .

There was never any alarm to me about a horse, and the very smell of the stables was intoxicating. Beautiful, glossy-coated carriage-horses, a pony for us to ride, and numberless farm-horses—all were beloved. One of these last was called Taffy, an enormous fellow, noted for his ferocity. At dinner one day I was missing, and as children never fail to turn up

at meal-time unless something has gone wrong, a search was ordered. I could be found in none of the usual haunts, and as I was only five years old, anxiety began. At last I was discovered seated cross-legged, with complete unconcern, under Taffy, who was munching from his manger. The stable-boy who accidentally found me had to entice me away, for he was afraid to go near Taffy himself.

Only one dog do I remember. I think he was so dear to every one that when he died the family could never bear to have another. Theo was a great shaggy Newfoundland, who joined in all our childish games as well as ever he could, being treated as a member of the family. The old cook was heard to say one day, as she stooped to pick up his dish, 'Have you finished, please, Master Theo?' Barnholt once offered him a bite of his bun, but Theo did not quite understand the limits implied in the word 'bite', and the whole bun disappeared.

With such profusion of cows, sheep, pigs, poultry, and vegetation of all kinds, Reskadinnick was practically self-supporting, and my grandfather was able to boast frequently that there was nothing on the dinner-table but what he had produced on the farm. Fish was a rare treat, and a gift of trout or salmon was prepared and served with a ritual almost religious. Now and again there would resound from the lane a penetrating cry of 'Pilchards! Pilchards!' There had been a big haul, and a pony-cart was going round the country-side to sell them. All other food-preparations were then set aside for a pilchard orgy. The staple food was 'pig-meat' in its endless variety, and poultry. We had an old cookery-book containing this, to a London mind, extraordinary hint: 'If you have nothing in the house, and company should come, take a cold turkey, &c.' To suggest the killing and cooking of a live turkey is reasonable enough, but to select a cold one from one's 'empty' larder!

Bread was made every day, in batches of a dozen manchet loaves. A 'manchet' was a loaf moulded by hand, and not put in a tin. It was against ancient ritual for a loaf that had been cut to be placed on the table. My aunt was so angry one

day when this occurred that I began to wonder what became of all the bread that was left. However, the mystery was solved when I saw her preparing a mash for the turkeys. In my day German yeast was used, but mother told me that when she was little they had no yeast, but used a bit of the dough of the previous batch to raise the new batch. What puzzled her so much was how they ever *began* it. Probably she asked and no one knew, for like so many Cornish customs it may have been centuries old, and I picture the Phoenicians bringing a piece of dough as a capital invention of the East. They used to bake the loaves, mother told me, by placing them in the wood-ash on the great stone slab in the kitchen. The stone slab is still there, and I have often stood on it and looked up the great chimney to the open sky. How jolly, I thought, those old wood fires must have been, with their spits and their cauldrons, so much more fun than the iron range, which in its turn seems fun compared to my modern efficient gas-stove.

The centre of excitement in the food scheme was the dairy. Its stone floor and slate shelves made it cool on the hottest day. On the shelves were ranged vast pans of milk, in various stages from cow to consumer. Foaming in from the milking-sheds, standing for the cream to rise before being scalded, scalded and thick with the deep cream waiting to be skimmed (the most attractive form), scalded and allowed to be drunk *ad lib.*, sold to children at the door for a halfpenny a quart, or more often given to them for nothing. Now I had a special and private permit from my aunt to go into the sacred dairy and help myself to the clotted cream whenever I liked.

The bulk of the cream was, of course, turned into butter. Turned, not churned. A churn was never seen at Reskadinnick. It had been heard of, and actually used by my aunt who lived up in the town, but Tony, my golden aunt of Reskadinnick, tossed her head at the idea. She had her own ritual of butter-making, and many a time I used to curl up in the corner of the kitchen window-seat to watch it. Her hands had to be elaborately washed first, and dipped in cold water to be cool. The wooden tub with the cream in it had to be held at a special

angle on her lap. With fixed eye and stern mouth she then began to swirl the cream round, and you mustn't speak to her till the butter 'came'. One day I was allowed as a great treat to make a little butter all by myself, with no one even watching. When it 'came', behold, it was very good, and the joy of creation was mine.

Disapproval, of course, among the severer grown-ups. It was mad to let the child try such things. She might have wasted it all. But Tony was all for letting the children do and see and try things. I was wakened one night by a figure standing over me with a candle. It was Tony. 'Come along,' said she, picking me up and carrying me out pick-a-back, 'we are going to see the glow-worms.' And sure enough she carried me along the drive in my nightdress, to a spot where the worms were shining, and the elders gathered round admiring them. The child didn't catch her death, as was gloomily hoped by the disapproving, but lived to be always grateful for that only chance that has ever come her way of seeing a glow-worm.

Sanitation was not known at Reskadinnick, neither earth nor water nor any such thing. A huge tub collected the rain-water, of which there was never any shortage, and in this we washed. I had never seen a bathroom, even in London, let alone in Cornwall. A tin bath was kept in each bedroom. In the rain-water was a good deal of live stock wriggling about, but we got used to this. Our drinking-water was grand, coming from a spring in the lane.

Windows were made to open more or less, but they didn't matter much, because all through the day everybody was in and out at the ever-open doors, and in the evening when the family settled down 'to unbend over a book' every opening was shut tight. 'Night air' and 'such a draught' were considered 'enough to breed the cholera'. Our light was from candles and paraffin-lamps. Mother told me how magical it seemed to her when she first came to London to see some one turn a tap and produce a light at once from gas. She had heard how the 'best' people in London stood out against gas as being

vulgar, and that Grosvenor Square was the last place to adopt it.

In spite of primitive conditions and stuffy nights, no one ever seemed to be ill. I never saw a doctor there, or heard the name of one, or heard mother speak of one in earlier days. The older people all lived to great ages, and Uncle Bill reached a hundred. Up to his last few days he could swing along without a stick. He had travelled extensively, even to Greenland, but was born and died at Reskadinnick.

All this travelling of Uncle Bill and my grandfather was for mine-prospecting. Farming was not their main interest. Tin was everything, and it was as tin-mine managers and large shareholders that they made their wealth; and the management of the farm fell to a younger son, Joe.

The chief person round whom the whole establishment revolved was my aunt, always called Tony. Ever since her mother's death she had been mistress of the house. Not only did she manage every detail of the dairy, the poultry, and the work of the servants, but she was also widely read, an accomplished musician, a witty letter-writer, and above all an entrancing teller of stories. Her peculiar charm consisted in her greater delight in the doings of others than in her own. We children loved her, I think, better than our own mother.

It was from mother that I learnt her story. Among my grandfather's travels was a visit to Norway, in connexion with a purchase of timber for the mines. He took with him, just for the fun of it, his two eldest girls, my mother and Tony. The port for Norway had to be reached by coach, and this, with the putting up at inns and the voyage in a sailing-vessel, provided plenty of adventure. Their host was a Norwegian named Barnholt, a timber-merchant on a large scale, with one son, named Otto. The visit was made the occasion for excursions up country, mountaineering, driving, riding, and sailing on the fjords. When the time came for the return to Cornwall Otto had lost his heart to Tony.

Not long afterwards Otto's father died, leaving him to carry on the business of trading with England in timber. Nothing

ever went wrong with his vessel, and in his anxiety to be a little richer before his marriage he stopped paying the insurance. On the very next voyage she was lost. Utterly broken in spirit Otto died soon afterwards, and Tony never got over her grief. She had plenty of admirers and appeared to enjoy life to the full, but froze up if any one approached the idea of marriage. All her wealth of affection was poured out on us children, and more especially on Barnholt, who was Otto's godson. She was the familiar friend, too, of all the cottage children for miles around, who would do anything for 'Miss Tony'. She had learnt to speak Norsk, and taught me to repeat little verses in it. It was one of my greatest treats to come into her bedroom and be shown some of the endless treasures she had collected. Among these was a baby shoe of Barnholt's with a hole worn in its sole.

I may add here that she lived to old age, full of humour and gaiety to the last. But shortly before her death she mentioned casually in a letter to me that the one thing she could never thank God for was her creation. I understood then how much a woman can hide.

Some years before my memory runs, Uncle Bill had brought his wife and three children back to Reskadinnick to stay, and there they remained permanently. So there was no lack of inmates. My special chum was Wilhelmina, or Mina, a girl of my own age. Mina's mother was an aunt of the severe type, in whose presence we were reticent about our escapades. Aunt Knight feared accidents, feared improprieties, feared (of all the absurdities) ill effects from non-stop apple-eating. One thing I shall never forgive her to my dying day: she got wind that Mina and I were riding home from a field on the top of the hay-wagons, and forbade it with such gestures of horror that we were actually alarmed into obedience. For us the wine of life was spilt for the whole hay season. However, she could be kindness itself when things went really wrong. When some little accident did occur, it was just as she had predicted, and one of her rare smiles appeared as she brought forth bandages and things. One day my pony, empty-saddled, came galloping

home along the drive. A stirrup had broken and I had been thrown. Aunt Knight looking out of the window straightway swooned, and had to be given restoratives in early Victorian style. Her handwriting was exactly like Queen Victoria's, and she always crossed her letters. She swept about in black silk, had texts hung up in her bedroom, and shook her head with disapproval at any gaiety. I made Tony laugh by telling her that Aunt Knight was like Dogberry: 'If a merry meeting may be wished, God prohibit it.' As for a funeral anywhere about, it was nuts and figs, she was sure to have heard a dog howl, an owl hoot, or a bird flutter in the chimney, and consequently knew that something would happen. If Sirius were shining brightly it meant that Hell was very full.

Christianity did not seem to have penetrated Cornwall much. The Wesleyans were full of salvation and blood, but respectable Church people upheld Old Testament morality, with only lip-service to the New. Tony told me one day that she thought the New Testament was very dull compared to the Old. One Victorian custom which my father (God bless him!) had never even contemplated, was always observed at Reskadinnick. Family prayers, which my dear old grandfather had treated sketchily, were carried out by Uncle Bill with relentless thoroughness. Instead of mumbling a few simple requests to the Almighty, as grandpapa did, he acquired a book which covered the whole nation in its petitions, and even, on Fridays, went the length of praying for foreigners. All the servants were assembled, and it was morning *and* evening. As Lord Melbourne remarked, religion was threatening to invade the sanctity of private life. Perhaps he referred to Wesleyanism, for I must say that we had no more thrust upon us, except going to church on Sunday. In spite of Uncle Bill's long prayers, I heard him say one day that he thought it *wrong* to pray for anything except courage to meet whatever came.

Our parish church was at Penponds, a village some two miles away. The dear old parson was a survival of the eighteenth-century type, who took his duties lightly. His sermons were so few that Tony said she knew them all by heart and needn't

attend to them. This was as well, for her energy was completely absorbed in keeping the school children decently behaved. To us London children the whole service seemed light comic opera after the austerities of St. Paul's. Of course we never had the Litany, and the old chap would gabble through the alternate verses of the Psalms as fast as he could, followed by the hurried mumblings of the little congregation. All was simple and quickly over. On Communion Sunday (a very rare affair) matters were equally simple. Tom once 'stayed', and heard the pop of the cork as the parson opened the bottle of wine just before it was wanted.

Sundays on the whole were very jolly in Cornwall, if it hadn't been for the best clothes and the wearing of gloves. On account of these we couldn't pursue the usual plan of walking along the tops of the hedges. To those who don't know Cornwall I must explain that the hedges there are made of stones and earth, are thick with wild flowers, ivy, and ferns, and are just wide enough on the top to allow any one to walk unsteadily. Mina and I used to take one each side of a lane, and race each other along. Naturally this involved several falls and scrambling up again—not the best thing for Sunday clothes.

In the afternoons we unbelted and lay under the trees with any books we could find. My eldest cousin Beatrice was serious-minded like her mother, and attempted now and again to hold a Sunday School, and teach Mina and me something out of the Bible. But out of doors, as of course we were, the Bible somehow seemed funny, and the idea petered out.

In addition to the uncles, aunts, and cousins already mentioned there was another large family in the town about two miles away, and the coming and going was so unremitting that one hardly knew who belonged where. Sometimes even before breakfast a detachment of Uncle Joe's children would be seen coming round the last bend of the drive, full of expectancy that there would be something up.

And there always was.



## XI

### *Outdoor Doings*

‘D’ess me! D’ess me now! D’ess me *deckly* now!’ According to tradition these were my words, accompanied by a stamp of my foot, as I stood at the top of the stairs one morning in my nightdress. I had overslept for once, and was frantic at having missed an hour of life. Not a moment’s boredom did any of us know, but our programme depended a lot on the weather. Uncle Bill had a trying habit of tapping a kind of clock in the hall and telling us that it was going down. It surely must have gone up sometimes, in order to go down so persistently, but he never reported it. Then some wise grown-up would openly rejoice: rain was good for the garden or the tin-streams or something. However, by and by would come Uncle Joe on his horse, with a broad smile and distinct observations of blue sky in the right quarter.

Enough for us, and the glad cry of ‘cliffs’ would go round. Within an hour of the children’s fiat Tony had packed our baskets, having duly looked round to see how many heads to count. Pretty heavy those baskets were, for in addition to the dinner they contained sketching-materials, bathing-gowns and towels, and often a book or two. However, the boys took it in turn to carry them, and the girls took sticks, spratting-hooks, and cans for possible treasures.

In twos and threes we straggled along our two-mile walk to the cliffs, a gradual rise all the way, chiefly across fields. We had no glimpse of the sea at any time until we were right at the top of the cliffs. We generally ran the last hundred yards or so, impatient for the glory that we knew to be there for us. That last lap was along a grassy path running through a stretch of purple heather. Then we saw the sea. Not the tame affair that you get at the ‘sea-side’, but a vast expanse of ultramarine and emerald, and far, far below, the roar of the breakers booming in and dashing their foam against the dark

rocks, and the white flashing of the sea-gulls screaming to welcome us.

However, we were not there to admire—we were for the sea itself. And how to get down there? Had we been strangers we should have been afraid to attempt such a precipitous descent, but none of us could remember a time when it was not as familiar and friendly as the drive. We all plunged at once down a narrow path, a mere sheep-track, among the rocks and heather, scrambling and slithering and sliding, clutching at bushes or digging our spratting-hooks into the earth, till we reached at last a big platform of rock, from which we made a triumphal leap into the deep, soft sand.

Fortunately grown-ups never came with us, or they would have had heart-attacks, or, worse still, would have kept warning us not to slip. Our fearlessness was our safety. Once within a few yards of the sea, our things were off in a twinkling, and into the great pools we splashed. No one dreamt of venturing into that boiling, thundering, open sea, for its perils were too obvious. After about an hour of playing games in the pools, jumping from rock to rock, collecting anemones, shells, and seaweed for our cans, we clothed ourselves again, all except our feet which were bare till the final climb, and flocked round my eldest cousin, Beatrice, who dispensed the dinner. Our first course was always a pasty. I wonder who invented that perfectly complete and portable meal: a round of pastry doubled over contained fresh rump steak, and slices of potato well seasoned, and when baked became a juicy blend, but not too juicy to be grasped in the hand and nibbled away bit by bit, requiring neither knife nor fork. Then we all chased away to find a jolly place to sit, or to go on pursuing our private ends. Thirst soon brought us to Beatrice again, who doled out lemonade or cider. Then there was seed-cake for the still hungry, and plenty of apples.

After this we usually paddled and scrambled our way among the boulders to the next place along the shore that gave a possibility of climbing up again. About half-way up we would rest on some grassy shelf of the cliffs and follow our

particular bent. Charles and Beatrice and I did some painting, others would merely watch the sea for distant steamers. No boats of any kind could come near that coast. My cousin Lucy had a passion for the sea, and never forgave Providence for not making her a boy. She had several blue-jackets to whom she wrote every month in connexion with Miss Weston's Mission, and from their replies she would spin us yarns, or tell us bits out of *Tom Cringle's Log*, and incidentally teach us nautical phrases and how to tie knots.

After the last lap of our long climb to the top we used to enjoy walking along the grassy path among the heather that skirted the edge of the cliff, every now and again dangerously near. At one point this led to 'Hell's Mouth', quite the most attractive spot in the world. It was a deep cove that could not be approached from the shore, and into which no boat could enter without being dashed to pieces. We used to crawl up to the overhanging edge on all fours, lie full length, and gloat with fearful pleasure at the scene below, where the great waves would swirl in on their ugly business, and presently dash out with triumphant roar and splash of spray. Lucy had blood-curdling tales of human bones down there, of people who had fallen down, or, more darkly, been pushed. I have had to come away hurriedly, understanding Horatio's words:

*The very place puts toys of desperation  
Without more motive into every brain  
That looks so many fathoms to the sea  
And hears it roar beneath.*

On the way home we wandered about the fields, gathering any spoil we could find to take home to Tony—blackberries, mushrooms, wild flowers. She welcomed everything, but her first demand was always, 'Show me your sketches.' If sea and rocks proved too maddeningly difficult we fell back on a drawing of Carn Brea, a kind of local Fuji-Yama or holy hill. Tony paid us the compliment of severe criticism. To one of my attempts she said, 'Heather, dear? Oh . . . I thought it was an impression of the field of Waterloo after the battle.'

those who never grow up, and what a real immortality they have! I have thought my Uncle Nicholas would have been the best of all, and grieved for him out of all proportion.

Another pond was of considerable size, occupying the whole of the end of the mowey. Here we let ourselves go. The boys made a raft of two stout planks, and by means of broomsticks were able to navigate the whole pond. A high hedge separated it from the field beyond, but here and there was a foothold on the bank where one could land. Each of these landing-places had some far-flung name—the Cape, Straits Settlements, Yokohama, and so on. One day we enticed the cook up into the mowey ‘for a sail’. She stepped cautiously on board (*le mot juste*), and before she could retreat Charles pushed off, and after a passage of peril and protest landed her at Madras. She was glad to feel the shore, but before she knew where she was Charles had put to sea again, leaving poor Temperance marooned. We other mariners in the home port shouted with joy, little considering that the family dinner was at stake. After raising the welkin to no effect, Temperance determined to try for an overland passage, and finally tore and scratched her way through the hedge into the lane. She was too devoted to the ‘young gentlemen’ to tell the grown-ups, and accounted for her scratches and the lateness of dinner in a way that would have satisfied Scotland Yard.

Not all our adventures on the pond could be so easily hidden. Barnholt and Edgar were once in possession of the raft, when Edgar invited me to come on too. ‘It’s all nonsense,’ said he, ‘about its only holding two, and you are only a little girl—your weight won’t count,’ and he held out his hand. Now I liked Edgar and trusted him, so on I stepped. The boys used their poles very carefully, and for a couple of yards all was well. But soon it was clear that our feet were wet. Another yard, and we were ankle-deep. ‘Women and children first,’ shouted Barnholt, and as the whole thing slithered into the pond, Edgar gave me a mighty push towards the shore. It was more mud than water after the first foot or two, and we were all too filthy to do anything but go straight back to the house and be

hearty, and awfully sorry and generally comforted with baths and clean clothes.

Of course Lucy came out strong on the pond. She could not wait for her turn on the raft one day, and searched the barn for some rival craft. She found a large wooden case, without a lid, that seemed the very thing. There were visible chinks between the planks, but she didn't stay to caulk them. In the poultry-yard she found a tin bowl for baling purposes, and with her broom-pole leapt aboard the *Arethusa*, proclaimed herself Nelson off Copenhagen, and fiercely made for the raft, splashing the water at it as much as she could with cries of 'Surrender'. The boys sprang to the sea-fight with whoops of energy, one of them pushing towards Lucy, and the other splashing her. All were soon drenched, but that only heightened the excitement. We others on the shore shouted encouragement to both sides. But Lucy had the odds against her. Baling had to be constant, and although she managed a few swiping blows at the boys with her pole, every time she lunged at them the old chest listed heavily, and let in more water than any baling could cope with. Sinking, but fighting still, she was at last obliged to strike her colours, but we all felt that hers was a moral victory.

Many a time when the boys were off on some excursion of their own, far afield, and Beatrice was absorbed in domestic or social duties, Mina and I were left to ourselves. We had trained the grown-ups not to worry if we were late coming home. Tony was apt, however, to get fidgety if we did not turn up at dusk. 'Oh, my dears,' she would say, 'I was getting so hurried. I was afraid one of you had gone "over cliff."' 'Hurried' in Cornwall means 'anxious'; hence the saying: 'There was once an old woman who died in a hurry.' A tale was current about two little boys who went to the cliffs, one fell over, and the other was too paralysed with fright to go home until nightfall. This incident would seize Tony's imagination if any of us was late.

Apart, then, from a decently early return, nothing was expected of us. The authorities could rely on us to look after our

own food-supply. I suppose no better education could be given two children than this freedom of the farm and countryside, and some of the happiest days of my life were spent with Mina, wandering about as chance directed. The grounds were so large that we were continually discovering some copse or hidden path or plantation that even Mina had not observed before. As a London child my ignorance about trees, poultry, and animals was complete, and all their ways were astounding. Warm eggs, eggs in the act of being laid, warm, foaming milk, a newly-born calf able to walk at once, absurd little chicks . . . , and Mina explained everything to me. The mill was a never-failing show-piece: we saw how the water managed to turn the wheel; we liked the jolly clack-clack of the works, and to bury our arms in the grain as it poured out of a wooden shoot. Another star place to visit was the forge. The old blacksmith generally had something going on. Bible miracles paled for me beside the incredible way in which he twisted a piece of red-hot iron just as his whim directed.

It was in the lane by the smithy that Mina and I had our one and only quarrel. I have no recollection of what it was about, but I was more blindly furious than at any other time in my life. I stammered out, 'You are a carcass.' I had no idea what the word meant, but it seemed to satisfy me and certainly roused Mina. We agreed to fight it out, and asked the blacksmith to see fair play. Mina was a little older and heavier than I was, but I hadn't had four brothers for nothing, and knew some bits of the noble art. Mina was soon running indoors, calling heaven to witness her wounds. Tony appeared, looked at the 'bruises', declared them to be only dirt, and to Mina's intense chagrin washed them off. I was then rather sorry for her, apologized handsomely for my dreadful word, and all was well again.

One place was our special home from home, and when we determined on a long visit to it serious supplies had to be collected. We raided the pantry for splits, the dairy for 'apple-meat', and the kitchen garden for any fruit in season—strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries. A bottle of skimmed milk,

or cider from the cask, a mug, and a book to read—all were stuffed into a basket, and we set off for the drive. About half-way down we plunged through the trees, crossed a brook, and found our objective, a giant oak. Now this tree had some strategic advantages. The trunk sloped at a convenient angle, but had no branches low down. At great pains we had cut little foot-holds which we knew how to use, but which escaped general observation. In fact the tree itself was barely visible from the drive, and when we were up the leaves hid us completely. The branches had contrived to twist themselves into comfortable seats with backs, and places to hang our basket.

When all was arranged we brought out the book. Only one, because a great point was its being read aloud in turn. We chose from the library shelves any book of Tales for the Young, and took much pleasure in prophesying the events. We could rely on Providence to punish the naughty and bring to notice the heroism of the good, and generally grant an early death to both. Why was there a bull in a field? To gore the disobedient. Why did cholera break out? To kill the child who went down a forbidden street. The names told us much: Tom, Sam, or Jack were predestined to evil, while a Frank could do nothing but good. Henry was a bit uncertain: he might lead his little sister into that field with bravado, or he might attack the bull to save her life at the cost of his own. We had bettings of gooseberries on such points.

One of our stories ran something like this:

#### THE LAST SHOP

A little girl who had a very rich mamma behaved herself so well one day that her kind parent said, 'Rosy dear, we will go for a walk down the street where the shops are, and you shall buy whatever you like, because you have been so good.' Skipping for joy little Rosy began to think of all the things she had been longing for. But mamma made one condition—that Rosy *must* buy something out of each shop. That seemed very easy, and the walk began well. A doll's perambulator in the first shop, some expensive lollipops in the next, some tarts

at the confectioners, a pair of crimson slippers, some fancy-coloured note-paper, a whole pineapple, and a real writing-desk with secret drawers in it. In each case the purchase was ordered to be 'sent', and Rosy soon became anxious to go home in order to be ready to receive them. But mamma's face grew solemn.

'Have you quite finished, my child?'

'Oh, yes, thank you, dear mamma, pray let us return home.'

'I fear, my child, that there is *one* shop that you have omitted.'

So saying, she led Rosy to the undertaker's, and had her measured for a coffin. In this kind way, my dear young readers, little Rosy was early led to realize that death was the necessary end to all her pleasures.

This was among the more cheerful of the tales, for death itself usually befell the leading characters. Indeed, the mortality among children was so great that Mina and I wondered how any of them remained alive to grow up.

'How to improve Birthdays' was the promising title of one story. We were disgusted to find that it was all about a certain Caroline, who thought a great deal about her ailing mamma, ran upstairs to fetch things, amused baby, gave her dinner to the poor, and was beloved by young and old. Her new idea for a birthday was to give away to her friends, especially the poorer ones, all the things she liked best. At the head of the tale was a picture of unselfish Caroline, dispensing her books and toys to the poor, and among these gifts I noted a perfectly good paint-box. You can guess the text that was printed under this picture. We showed it in disgust to Tony, whose only comment was a snort, and 'Caroline's left hand seems to know all about it.' I studied the picture again, but could see nothing peculiar about Caroline's left hand.

As for the strategic advantages of our tree, an incident will best show what I mean. A certain visitor had been invited to tea. It must not be supposed that having any one to tea was the casual affair of to-day. An invitation would run a week ahead, special 'company' cakes would be prepared, involving



much beating of eggs and squeezing of lemons, the table would be laid early with the crown Derby cups and saucers, and almost immediately after dinner would come a dreaded ordeal of extra washing and hair-doing and getting into best clothes, followed by a sitting quiet in case we got dirty again.

Now the Miss Tyack who was expected was an elegant young lady, pretty, polite, well dressed, and devoid of a single endearing failing. 'An oyster without a pearl' was mother's description of her. She neither talked nor functioned in any way beyond a watery smile and gentle assent to everything. Her visit therefore meant some three hours' hard work.

Mina and I got together and shabbily decided that we would escape. No sooner was the midday meal over than we faded out separately, selected some sample buns and cakes from the dishes already loaded for tea, and repaired to our ark. An afternoon of fearful joy lay before us—fear that we should be caught and brought back, and joy at out-witting the authorities.

Settled in the tree we found to our dismay that neither of us had thought to bring a book, and we didn't dare to go back to fetch one. So we agreed to play at being Charles II and Richard Penderel at Boscobel, with Miss Tyack filling the role of Cromwell's soldiers. The oak was in full September leaf, but now and again Mina would say to me, 'Your Majesty must keep your head a wee bit lower,' to which I would reply, 'A king fears nothing, my worthy Penderel.' Stories of Cromwell's cruelty were related, until the dramatic moment arrived.

'Hark, your Majesty!' whispered Mina. 'They approach!'

Hardly daring to breathe lest a twig should snap and betray us, we heard the mincing steps of Miss Tyack, and caught a glimpse of the pink ribbon of her hat. She drew level, and then passed, and as her footsteps died safely away we came near falling out of the tree with triumphant laughter.

Yes, we might laugh, but we hadn't reckoned on an hour or two of imprisonment. To make our game more real Mina had gone down several times into the wood and returned with 'food captured at the point of the sword from villagers'. In this dramatic way all our stock of provisions had been eaten.

We began to think enviously of Miss Tyack, how she was eating and drinking her fill, and being pressed to a little more. I was all for going boldly along, and bursting in on the company with some hearty tale of adventure, delay, mischance, no idea of the time, and what not. Mina didn't object to such deceit, but was horrified at the idea of appearing before visitors in her everyday frock.

Nothing would shake her, so at last I said, 'Well, Penderel, ourself will come to the aid of our distress. Do you remain here and keep watch.' So saying I slipped down the tree and made my way across a field at the back, and a long round that led eventually to the kitchen garden. Here I picked a large cabbage-leaf, filled it with raspberries, gathered a few apples, and stuffed them into the pocket of my pinafore. With enormous difficulty I made my way back to the faithful Penderel, spilling only a few raspberries *en route*.

When this spoil had been disposed of, and time began to hang heavy, I broached the idea that the enemy had already retreated, while I was away. Mina stoutly maintained that she had never ceased to watch, and we had to set our teeth and wait.

After what seemed like a year or two the longed-for sound of mincing footsteps broke on our ears like the strains of 'The Campbells are Coming' to the survivors of Lucknow. Running home we were too tired and out of spirits to think up any good excuse, and when we were greeted with a chorus of 'Where *have* you been?' we merely looked pathetic, fell upon the remnants of tea, and endured in silence the description of Beatrice's noble struggle to keep the conversation going with Miss Tyack. She and another elder cousin, Emily, were gaining such glory from their unselfish behaviour that we began to feel that we had positively occasioned it by our modest retirement.

To give a tea-party was bad enough, but to go to one was worse. An inevitable return invitation from the Tyacks arrived in due course, with the usual week's notice, precluding all chance of evasion. Beatrice and Mina, who had been well

brought up with consciences in working order, immediately put this down to a 'judgement'. But Emily and I were more worldly, and as Emily pointed out, why should Providence be so stupid as to drag in herself and Beatrice, who deserved the best? These views were expressed at a private meeting in the garden.

'We shall have to play the piano,' said Beatrice.

'We shall have to go over the family album,' said Emily.

'We shall have to look through the stereoscope,' said Mina, 'and keep on saying how marvellous it is.'

'And they put sultanias into their saffron cake,' said I.

'I tell you what,' cried Emily excitedly. 'Let's not go.'

We laughed derisively, but she was full of her idea. 'Let's all be ill.'

As it was in mid-holiday, and we were in the rudest health, we looked at her inquiringly.

'Well,' said she, 'we've got a whole week, and if we refuse to eat all that time, we shall be too ill to go.'

'But how shall we keep from eating?' said I.

After a pause Beatrice had an idea for curbing our appetites. 'I will give two prizes to those who eat least in the time. We can watch one another and make a note of all that is eaten.'

'Let's see the prizes!' we exclaimed, and followed Beatrice up to her room, where she selected from her most sacred drawer two hidden treasures. The first was to be a gilt cross some four inches long, and the second was a wooden disk, with tiny toys in compartments round its edge; fixed to the middle was a pointer which you spun round and took the toy indicated. This was called a teetotum, and promised to be a wealth of magic delight. What was a little starvation, when such a prize could be secured?

We began well, for having made good dinners we were able to face a meagre tea. Nibbling our own bread and butter slowly, we watched one another's every mouthful. After tea Emily, who had been appointed to keep score, pronounced us all level. When supper-time was a repetition of this, Tony began to take notice.

'Whatever possesses the children? Have they been eating deadly nightshade, or wrong mushrooms, or something?'

'They've been stuffing themselves in the garden,' said Uncle Bill, and the matter passed.

Next morning Beatrice remained in bed with a 'sick headache', and asked for a cup of tea and one slice of dry toast to be sent up to her. This was grossly unfair, for by this means she was sure to get the first prize. Never mind, thought I, she is welcome to that old gilt cross, and there is still a chance of winning the teetotum. A scanty breakfast was followed by a Pacific Ocean of time to dinner. Either by chance or craft Tony had contrived a specially appetizing dinner, and when she pressed me to some chicken with 'eat it for my sake', I flung all chance of the prize to the winds, and fell upon it. At a meeting of the competitors in the afternoon, Emily confessed to having eaten raspberries on the quiet, and as I of course was out of the running, the teetotum fell to Mina. We all had to go to the party, and enjoyed it heartily in the mere fun of finding all our forebodings more than fulfilled.

Sometimes I would go forth quite alone, on some little errand for Tony, who said that a stranger from 'London town' would be impressive and entertaining to the numerous cottagers whom she befriended. I think that it was myself that was the more impressed usually. For instance, I was sent off to one of those cottages that have no privacy at all. I entered straight from the road, through the open door, into the living-room, and shall never forget the scene. Mrs. Polglaze, a cripple, was perched on a high chair in one corner of the tiny space. Seated on a couple of benches opposite her were seven or eight little children, mumbling aloud together, and laboriously pointing their fingers along what I supposed must be books. So black were these with use that no one could possibly read them, and the children must have been chanting from memory. Making my way through to Mrs. Polglaze I delivered Tony's pasties and fruit and butter, and was uncomfortable at her extreme gratitude. I returned to Tony full of questions.

'Yes, dear,' said she, 'tis a real school. Poor old Mrs. Polglaze gets a penny a week for each child she takes.'

'But does she live on that?' I asked.

'Well, not entirely,' replied Tony, pushing off to her work.

Another task she gave me was more formidable. One of our numberless family cousins was an old lady of strong Wesleyan convictions, who lived in a large house in the town. She had expressed a wish to see Cousin Mary's little girl. Consequently I was made tidy and despatched. Mina stood by and darkly suggested that Cousin Jane would be certain to try to convert me. But Tony encouraged me by saying that I need not stay more than ten minutes, and 'You can go in on these', she added, giving me a bunch of fine geranium-blooms.

All went as scheduled. I entered brightly with the flowers, answered all the questions as to dear mamma's health, how the boys were doing at school, how long my holidays were to last, and generally kept my end up so well that I clean forgot any danger from religion. I had my trump card to get out on—that they would be getting hurried at home if I were late for dinner—and rose from my chair with easy confidence. Alas! Cousin Jane rose too, spread herself majestically between me and the door, raised her hand, and said,

'I trust, my dear child, that you have decided for the Lord?'

Now I had gathered from the boys that any one who is mad or drunk or peculiar in any way must be humoured. So with all the glowing enthusiasm I could muster I replied,

'Oh, *yes*, Cousin Jane!'

Seeing her look of extreme pleasure, I sought to complete my stroke, and added, '*Rather!*'

At this she was so astonished that she was literally struck dumb, fell back a pace, and allowed me to slip past her, through the door, and out to freedom.

For one period every year there was a surfeit of out-door work for all. At harvest-time the whole place far and wide became a tornado of doings. Tony was anchored to the kitchen, producing portable food for the men in the fields and for us children. There was a great brewing of 'herby beer',

which I once tasted because Edgar said it was good. Jars of this horrible liquor and of cider were everywhere available. The boys were all in two places at once. Uncle Joe was riding about on his horse, telling every one that this glorious spell of fine weather must be made the most of, for it surely couldn't last. And how we did work! There were no cutting-machines in those days, let alone binders. When I pass a harvest-field to-day I think how dull it seems. Yet how thankful Uncle Joe was when he was able to hire a machine for lifting the corn on to the rick.

Even I, the youngest of the crew, was able to do my bit, and I became quite an expert at binding, but could never equal the rate of the boys, who raced one another along the rows. Dinner-time was jolly. Not minding the heat we sat under one of the newly built corn-cocks, and devoured our pasties and cider. Then to work again, with no thought of anything so effeminate as tea, until dusk, when we returned to supper, weary and dirty, and went to bed early so as to be ready for the next day's work.

One day of my childhood was completely lost, and a glorious sunny day at that. Very rarely, for it was an expensive treat, the whole family, grown-ups and children, would go off to some distance for a long day. Sometimes it would be Penzance and the Land's End, sometimes the Lizard, sometimes Falmouth. It was usual to hire two long wagonettes, lunch at an hotel, and be free of the trouble of a picnic. Now a particularly favourite spot for such an expedition was Prussia Cove, which was full of possibilities, and more homely than the show places. There were little fishing-vessels in which we could have a sail. Shells of a rare and beautiful kind were to be found on the beach. Bathing was safe in the deep pools, and there were endless bits that we could sketch. The inn had once been the head-quarters of a famous old smuggler called the King of Prussia, and they could show you the false walls behind which he used to stow his kegs of brandy.

Well, one day we all set out for this desired haven, plotting during the long drive the special schemes that each had in

mind. A big spread was to be provided for midday in the inn, and our only duty was to get up an appetite.

Arrived, my one and only thought was the sea. I ran on to a rock and promptly fell headlong into a pool.

'Oh, that's all right, darling,' said Tony. 'Come into the inn and we'll pop you into bed while we spread your clothes round the kitchen fire. They won't take above ten minutes or so.'

I fell fast asleep, and never woke until they were all getting ready to go home. I could have borne the misery of disappointment better if they hadn't said that they thought the sleep would do me good. As if one went to Prussia Cove for one's good!

## XII

### *Indoor Doings*

CORNISH people are nearly amphibious. Their peculiar mist of fine rain surrounds you in such a way that an umbrella is useless. Both this mist and slight showers are hardly regarded. But a steady downpour will occasionally keep you in if there is no pressing need to go out. On a really wet day, therefore, we children had to amuse ourselves indoors.

Although Reskadinnick was intricate and rambling enough to satisfy any child, it had a nucleus or nerve-centre round which the whole life of the place seemed to revolve. It was called the 'front kitchen', but had nothing of a kitchen about it. It had been the main living-room of the original old farmhouse, but now served no definite purpose at all. Like some large-hearted friend it had no absorbing worries of its own, and was always empty and free for anything you wanted. Nowhere else have I come across a large room set aside for no purpose, and yet used continually. The dining- and drawing-rooms were solemnly devoted to Sundays and visitors; but the 'front kitchen' was far more dignified than either, in its homely aura of quiet.

Along one side of this room ran a row of casement windows, provided by nature with a long window-seat. This formed a perfect hiding-place if you stretched your length and kept your head down, because a colossal table of snow-white wood, hard as iron, was placed close alongside the window. The only other furniture consisted of a high-backed settle, a chair or two, and a grandfather's clock in a recess. At one end was the fireplace, with a high mantelpiece, holding two shapeless china animals, probably cats, always staring, reminding mother of the Cornishman who said his wife was 'no better than a cloamen cat'. The floor was paved with flagstones, never sanded as the ordinary kitchen was, and uncumbered by rug or carpet.



Here were held all family councils of moment, indignation meetings, and breaking of sad news. Here came Uncle Bill after he had written an important letter, to read it aloud, not to all the grown-ups together, but to each one in turn, to receive their admiration and slight improvements in the wording.

For one half-hour every day Tony would come here to 'do the milk'. The bulk of the dairy produce was sold to the cottages scattered over the downs, and for this purpose a stolid widow, named Mrs. Veal, trundled round a two-wheeled barrow holding a big container with tap attached. Very slowly she laboured up hill and down dale, without ever speaking a word apparently. Nothing could ruffle her, and goodness knows we tried hard enough. On her return Tony would take a seat at the great white table and spread out her business paraphernalia, consisting of a slate, a little account-book with pencil attached, and a kind of missionary box. I often slipped into the window-seat to listen to the rare sound of Mrs. Veal's voice, and marvel at her feats of memory. The ritual never varied: Tony read from her book the first name, thus: 'Mrs. Bray,' and Mrs. Veal would say, "Apoth and paid for et," laying down a halfpenny on the table. Tony put this into the box, made an entry on the slate, and went on to the next name—Mrs. Pendray. Then Mrs. Veal: "Apoth and dedn't pay for et." Another entry and another name. No one ever seemed to have more than a 'apoth, but many 'Dedn't 'ave any'. Watching this I hardly wondered that Mrs. Veal never indulged in idle chat, while her memory was functioning.

Once a week the big table was used for folding and ironing the huge family wash. For this purpose the irons were put in the fire till red hot and then slipped into brightly polished steel boxes with wooden handles—click, click they went over the enormous sheets and tablecloths. One day when Barnholt was tiny he insisted on walking on the table all in the midst of the operations. 'Heave 'e down, Miss Tony,' suggested one of the servants. 'No heave 'e down,' cried Barnholt, and heaved down he was not.

Apart from these domestic ceremonies the table was always available for anything that required elbow-room, such as wetting, stretching, and pasting on to boards the large sheets of drawing-paper that mother, Beatrice, and Charles used for their water-colour sketches.

Such a room positively called for theatricals, and not content with mere charades we once attempted a real play, a full-blooded melodrama, whose only light relief was the unintended. Charles and Beatrice produced it, and we underlings just did as we were told. Mina was pretty and made a fine heroine, but refused to sing in public. The operatic air that was essential for the piece had to be sung by Beatrice behind a screen, while Mina kept opening and shutting her mouth. Beatrice was the queen mother, Charles the heartless villain, and Edgar the hero. He had to look brave and say almost nothing. In fact he had but one speech: 'Draw your sword at once, Sir, and do not chatter.' This came at the crisis before the duel, but Edgar, who was quite word-perfect in it, and was tired of being the strong, silent man, always burst out with it before the time.

Rehearsals went on all day, and whenever the rain stopped we would run out and go over separate bits 'obscenely and courageously' in the garden. Old wardrobes and chests were ransacked for our dressings-up, and there was much competition for a blue quilted petticoat, a many-coloured silk shawl that mother had brought from Spain, and a black velvet cape lined with crimson. I say rehearsals, because the play never reached fruition. Not only did Charles and Beatrice come to continual loggerheads over the details, but the weather improved on us to such an extent that outside distractions were too strong for the team to be kept together.

However, as the dressing-up was the chief attraction, this we could do at any time for less ambitious acting. Getting away from the boys one afternoon, we plotted to take them in. Beatrice and Mina laid themselves out to dress me up as a nun. My forehead, ears, and throat were swathed in a towel (how hot I was!), a black kerchief was drooped over my head,

and a big black cloak pinned all round me. Then, watching my opportunity, I staggered out among the trees a little way down the drive, and thence approached the front door and knocked. This door was not often used except by strangers, and I had to wait till the housemaid had arranged herself to answer it. I had prepared a humble voice, and begged to see the lady of the house for a minute. I was then ushered obsequiously into the drawing-room. Choosing a seat with my back to the light I awaited my rather severe Aunt Knight. Thankful that it was not Tony, who would have spotted me, I began a most urgent appeal for a Home for Incurables. Now this was the kind of thing Aunt Knight liked, and she became quite emotional and full of inquiries. I worked myself up in describing a bad case, and she left the room to fetch a donation. At the door I heard her say, 'Do go in and speak to her a moment, Tom, it all seems very sad,' and who should come in but my brother, all politeness. I now pitched my tale a little higher, describing the harrowing scene when a patient was told that he was incurable, and should not we, who enjoyed such robust health, &c. I had not expected to encounter my eldest brother, who was only on a short visit and reckoned almost a grown-up, so what was my delight when I saw him putting his hand in his pocket as he murmured sympathetic dear-me's. When once I had grabbed his half-crown, I unveiled, and when Aunt Knight returned with her contribution she found us both in unseemly laughter.

Another time we all combined to disguise Charles as a distant cousin, a lady from the Cape, impersonating some one actually possible with a name that would 'go down'. Beatrice provided a dress and a flowing hat, and a pair of glasses made the get-up complete. When 'Miss Symons' had been ushered into the drawing-room, my aunts hurriedly improved their toilet, ordered tea to be laid in the dining-room, and swept in all graciousness of welcome. Mother never bothered to alter her attire for any one, but was equally taken in. Charles poured forth an endless flow of patter about the flora and fauna of South Africa, the beauties and dangers of the voyage, the

impertinence of his steward, and so on, answering all inquiries with careful accuracy (for we had prepared a few to ask him). All went swimmingly, and we were well through tea when Barnholt began to splutter, and the game was up.

It was an uncertain afternoon, neither rain nor shine, when some one started the idea of a war between boys and girls. It went with a swing. We girls agreed to remain in our big long bedroom, with windows on two sides, and pretend to be besieged in Lucknow. The boys were to be natives and make the attack. We sat tight and handed round apples as our last rations. Soon there was a thundering on the bolted door. At this we laughed, for it was only to frighten us. Next thing we knew was Edgar's head upside down at one of the windows. He knew the roof well and was hanging over. While we were making it hot for him with hair-brushes, Charles and Barnholt were at another window actually squeezing in. Our poor aims with pieces of soap and nail-brushes had no effect, and soon the battle was raging fiercely through the streets of Lucknow, round and under the beds, with pillows, bolsters, and knotted towels as weapons. When the place was a shambles, and sahibs and natives lying dead from laughter or exhaustion, Tony appeared to say what was all the noise and tea was ready.

Many a wet day was spent by Mina and me in exploring the house itself, in its cupboards, passages, and dark corners. In my grandfather's alterations and addition of the new house, the actual blending must have presented difficulties, and in one place a large empty space had been walled in between the new and the old. This space was the occasion for superstition. It was inhabited by a ghost, and possibly a skeleton. In Cornwall *omne ignotum pro mystico*. One of the 'new' bedrooms had a deep closet-cupboard standing immediately over this space, and the breakfast-parlour in the ancient part of the house had a cavernous cellar-cupboard running along underneath this space.

In one of our explorations of the bedroom closet, Mina and I heard voices in the cupboard below, obviously coming easily through the empty space. This suggested a chance of getting

a thrill, and we looked about for some one to frighten. A housemaid at the time, named Eliza, was even more superstitious than most Cornish people. She believed it was the piskies who caused the milk to burn when put on the fire to scald, who induced the turkeys to lay astray, who snatched away Tony's keys when they were lost and found in her apron-pocket after a widespread hunt (a common occurrence). She was the very one for our victim. We waited for the day when she had to turn out that bedroom. Mina stationed herself on the main staircase, whence she could flit casually about. As soon as Eliza had swept the room and was about to sweep the cupboard, Mina fled downstairs to give me the signal. I went into the cellar-cupboard, and, in the most sepulchral tones I could muster, said,

'Eliza! Eliza!'

The movement of the broom, just audible to me, ceased. I then repeated my invocation, adding, 'All is known. Be sure your sin will find you out.' At this I heard a scream, and Eliza rushing downstairs. Making straight for Tony, she said nothing of what she had heard, but confessed with shaking sobs that she had stolen two of Miss *Beatrice's* handkerchiefs, and had eaten some of the apple cake in the dairy that very morning. Tony had to comfort her instead of scolding, and advised her not to go so much to those experience-meetings at her Wesleyan Chapel. Mina and I stood in the offing in quiet sympathy.

Among the treasures we rooted out from old wardrobes was an illustrated Prayer Book, gone quite brown with age and damp. When tired of reading we could get laughter out of its absurd pictures of fat angels and cupids on clouds, saints in imminent peril but elegantly arranged clothes, Isaac gaily stepping to be cut up, John the Baptist's head dripping on a dish, the Innocents being hurled about, and (a great find) a service for Charles the Martyr and another for the Gunpowder Plot, each with a picture of the critical scene. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was another feast for us, especially the picture of St. Lawrence on his gridiron. It was always this picture that

came to my mind when I saw "Trespassers will be Prosecuted" posted up, for it was many years before I distinguished prosecution from persecution.

We also found a Bible with the Apocrypha, and were astonished at the readable stories it contained. Susannah seemed to us a pretty and amusing tale, but it must be remembered that we were ardent readers of the *Arabian Nights*, without having the faintest idea of the cruder meanings of the episodes.

Not even the wettest day could keep us confined to the house itself for long. We would make a dash across the yards and over the lane to the barn, and sit reading there with a lapful of apples. Once we found the barn a foot deep in grain, and immediately began to swim in it, pretending to be Midas swimming in gold. Unfortunately we spoke of our swimming feats at the dinner-table and were forbidden in horrified tones to do it again. It seemed that it was not good for the wheat.

A still pleasanter city of refuge was the granary, a large loft stretching over the whole length of the stables. Its main attraction was the spice of danger in reaching it, as well as the feeling of security from detection when we were up. The ladder to it from the stables was not always in place, and when we had fixed it up it was always shaky. After mounting this ladder we had a nasty scramble through the trap-door at the top. Once up we could race to and fro to our hearts' content, and watch all the comings and goings in the yard, feeling superior to every one, even that horrible turkey-cock.

The boys were fond of rummaging in the Office. Here were a high desk and a chest, both containing documents, letters, plans of mines, maps, and account-books. They once unearthed some black stamps, many of which were valuable, being some of the earliest penny stamps ever issued.

When all else failed we fell back on drawing and painting in the front kitchen. I can remember no dull hour at Reskaldinnick. And however dreadful the mess we made, Tony would always say: 'Where there is no ox the stall is clean.' As a child I thought this a funny remark, but now it seems quite otherwise.

### XIII

## *A Family Club*

LEAVING Cornwall was always a misery. Every accompaniment of it was miserable. We had to get up in the dark, choke down some breakfast, say good-bye to the cats, hope the station fly wouldn't come, wait on the lonely station platform for the fatal appearance of the train, scramble into any carriage, and worst of all wrench ourselves from Tony. Sometimes she would go as far as Truro with us, but that made the parting more prolonged and definitely worse.

However, spirits soon rose, for compensations became more weighty as the journey went on. Chief among these was the looking forward to seeing my father again, who was never able to spare more than a few days for a Cornish visit. We had heaps to tell him, and liked to show off our Cornish accent and turns of speech. For some time after our return we would say, 'Where's he to?' instead of the English, 'Where is he?' and 'Going out are you?' instead of 'Are you going out?' Tom had a theory that this method of putting the important word first came from our having been descended from the Romans. Our family name of Vivian was certainly of Roman origin. Some energetic member had the matter traced by experts, who 'discovered' to our immense delight that we were descended from the Roman centurion who jumped into the water crying, 'Desilite, milites!' To our fancy this brave invader fell in love with a Cornish maiden, and our lively family was the result, revelling in the motto: 'Dum vivimus vivamus'.

The name Vivian came in useful on our return journey, for our luggage was all labelled with it. At Paddington in those days all bags and trunks were arranged on the arrival platform under the letters of the alphabet. To find your belongings all you had to do was to go to the right initial. Since few people's

names began with 'V', our baggage was to be seen in lonely state. It seems to me a good plan, for friends could also meet you at the initial. There we would find my father with cab engaged and all ready for us.

None but an old Londoner can understand the curious attraction of the town. After the music of the words 'London only' at Reading, we gave ourselves up to the *nil admirari* spirit. The size and importance of the terminus might alarm a timid fellow passenger, but were nothing to us. The wet streets (for it invariably seemed to rain on our return), the reflections from the street-lamps and the shops, the utter indifference of everybody to us and our concerns—why was it fascinating even to a child? I suppose we took on that feeling of superiority to all the world, the idea of finality, that London gives. No sign-posts to other towns are to be seen. Here's London. Here you are. We were almost of the same mind as the old Cornish farm-labourer who could not be made to believe that there was anything *beyond* London.

Mother's power of producing a spread on our return home was able to work at a distance, for my main recollection of coming into the house was a big meal laid ready on the dining-room table, and the excited talk of all our doings as we sat round it. My father and usually Tom as well had to be shown all our sketches, bits of Cornish stone and shells, and be told all our jokes and hairbreadth escapes. The grief at leaving Cornwall was definitely over.

A change came over our home life when Tom left Shrewsbury. His education, except for Latin and Greek, had to begin again, and he started preparing for a London degree. Dym taught him mathematics, for his ideas in that line were hardly better than mine. Although literature was almost part of the family furniture and not a 'subject' in those days, history had to be studied, for Shrewsbury had been aware of nothing later than the Roman Empire. French he read every day with mother.

With all this being done at home, and Dym preparing for a mathematics scholarship at Cambridge, the study became



more a work-room than a play-room, and some kind of order had to be maintained. Now whatever else Tom had failed to learn at Shrewsbury he had acquired the knack of ruling others, and by common consent he became a kind of Dictator. A general meeting was held, and he divulged a grand scheme for organizing our life in the study on democratic lines. A family club was formed, to be called 'The Library'. The set of rules drawn up was to be as binding as the Decalogue. Like the Decalogue they were ten in number and chiefly negative. 'Thou shalt not' was the tone, but they did not interfere with the liberty of the decently behaved.

Although mother had nothing whatever to do with the affair, she must have been very glad of these rules, for they enabled the household to run smoothly without her having to harry, scold, or punish. Thus, in addition to regulations about work in the study, they forbade being late to breakfast (i.e. coming down after grace was said), going upstairs with boots on, omitting to brush your teeth, not hanging up coat and cap, and suchlike tiresome points for a mother to watch.

You may wonder how the club managed to enforce its rules. We all had definite pocket-money once a week, except me. I merely levied money from my father whenever I wanted some. Tom's plan was that we should be fined a penny, twopence, &c., up to sixpence, according to a definite scale of charges every time we broke a rule. He bought an account-book, assigned a page to each of us, and reckoned up how much each owed at the end of the week.

Still you may wonder how the payment of the fines was enforced. It was quite simple—no payment, no entry to the study. Since the study was the heart of our home, to be shut out of it was misery. Only once was there a failure to pay up. Barnholt was not recalcitrant, but bankrupt. I shall never forget the two days that he was shut out, wandering disconsolately about the house, doing his hateful lessons on the stairs. Mother was wrung with pity, and so indeed were all of us, but we dared not interfere with discipline by subsidizing him. However, I had private means, could stand it no longer, and

advanced him something . . . and Tom had the sense to make no ugly inquiries.

Tom soon found what he had no doubt hoped—that we had quite a nice little sum of money. He then unfolded his larger plan: the club was to be a real library. The shelves that had been decorated with childish fancies were cleared and made ready for books, and the first outlay was to be an additional bookcase that Charles had seen in Upper Street second hand. The books themselves made quite a respectable show. Tom had brought a good many from Shrewsbury, one of which was actually a prize. Dym had plenty of prizes and a lot of mathematical books. One I took to be *Comic Sections* was very disappointing when I opened it. Charles and even Barnholt had gained a prize or two, and we all had several gift books. When we had levied some Scott and Dickens from the bookcase downstairs our shelves began to look businesslike.

Imagine our excitement when we found that soon after the bookcase had been bought we had enough money to buy a *new* book. The number of books suggested, the meetings we held, the time spent in discussing the various possibilities—it all seems beyond belief to-day, when books are so cheap. The die was cast at last. Our love of *Ungava* determined us to get another of Ballantyne's, and Tom was commissioned to buy *The Iron Horse*. I asked Charles what it would be about. 'It'll be something like the story of the wooden horse at Troy, I hope,' said he. Surely no book was ever read and re-read and talked over as that first new volume, although we went on to buy many more.

One book we kept merely as a joke against Tom, for no one ever opened it, and its pages were uncut. Tom had been sent by my father to buy Barnes on St. Matthew. The bookseller said he was sorry that he had not Barnes on St. Matthew, he had only Barnes on Isaiah. 'Oh, that will do,' said Tom amiably, and he bought it and took it home, to cause more merriment than Barnes would have thought possible.

The outcome of our Library idea was an increased pride in the room itself. We took it in turn week by week to dust and

tidy the study before breakfast. Since Tom didn't go to school he had time after breakfast to make a tour of inspection, and if he found any part undusted, or a book lying about, he charged the weekly cleaner any fine he thought right, 'not exceeding sixpence'. We never disputed his authority, for he took his own turn quite fairly and paid up his own fines. However, he had the privilege of being allowed to pay one of us to do his cleaning.

For small misdemeanours, such as doing sums aloud, shaking the table, or spilling the ink, Tom executed summary justice by means of a big, round, black ruler, that always lay on the table like the mace in Parliament. 'Hold out your hand,' he would say very quietly, and down would come the blow, fairly softly if you were quick in holding out your hand. I was spared the ruler, whatever I did, but otherwise was a full member of the club for all privileges and penalties. And I was an ever-ready runner of messages and fetcher of 'my india-rubber, darling, on the hall table'. In fact stairs were my hobby, for I could do three at a time. One day I was foolish enough to defy Tom. He was busy, and told me to pick up a piece of paper that had floated on to the floor. 'No, I won't,' said I, rushing to the door. I saw Tom get up, and dreading what he might do to me I fled in real terror to my bedroom, and crouched down on the farther side of the bed and hid under the valance. Tom followed at a leisurely pace, came over, picked me up in his arms without a word, and carried me up to the study. There he made my hand grasp the bit of paper and place it on the table. I felt very foolish, and, strange as it may seem, that is the only difference I have ever had with Tom throughout our lives.

After a while we were in sufficient funds to take in some magazines. *Sunshine* and *Little Folks* for the younger ones, and *Cassell's Family Magazine* for us all. I can still remember the deep interest I took in a long serial story called 'March Winds and April Showers bring forth May Flowers'. To my great satisfaction it didn't turn out to be all about nature, but about a large family of boys and girls, who got into scrapes,

quarrelled, and made it up again, and had various jolly adventures. One short story in my magazine was amusing enough for the boys to read. 'Don't let the Joneses know' described some children going to a party. They were in distress because they had only a donkey-cart to go in. The rich Joneses were their special dread. These rich people would roll up in their carriage and pair, and would laugh if they heard about the donkey. 'Whatever you do, don't let the Joneses know'—that was the order of the day. Scheming by various delays to arrive late so as to slip in unobserved, they drew up at the precise moment that the Joneses had hit upon. Steeling themselves for the worst, they were astonished to find all the Joneses crowding round their cart, not with jeers, but with delighted admiration. 'How lovely! Look! A real donkey! And Harry driving it himself!' By this time the other guests had run out to look, and all were exclaiming, 'Oh, how we wish we had a donkey!' In fact they and their donkey were the main topic of talk and source of envy all the evening.

Mother specially liked this story, for it illustrated her oft-repeated injunction that for comfort and success in life one must never suppose that any other people whatsoever are one's social superiors, 'because,' she added succinctly, 'they aren't'.

*Cassell's Magazine* provided stronger meat, far more substantial than we get in the average magazine to-day. It had to last us a month, and I think every word of it found some reader in the family. When we had all read the portion of the serial story, and very definitely not before, we discussed endlessly at tea-time how the characters would turn out and who would marry whom. With so little new reading-matter to distract us we were able to carry all the details in our head until the next issue. The plot seems simple as I look back on it: a girl was engaged to a man whom duty bade her marry, while she was really in love with another. No one in those stories was ever actually married to the wrong man. To me the triangle seemed insoluble, and I was all prepared for a broken heart and tears. But Charles announced one day that the first

young man would die, and all would be well. 'How do you know?' we asked him. 'I noticed him cough in the second chapter.'

Charles broke our rule of never discussing a book's plot with one still reading it, when he saw me one day deep in *A Journey to the Interior of the Earth*. 'Have you come to where they all die?' said he. I read on, expecting the worst on every page, until the end showed them all alive and well. I went to Charles in no little heat. 'Well,' said he, 'I never said they all died, I only asked you if you had come to it. And if you weren't a little silly you would know that they couldn't have *all* died, or who was left to tell the story?'

Wedding-bells were the usual end to our stories, of which *The Heir of Redclyffe* was a fair sample. Needless to say I had no notion of any difficulties after the bells had pealed. I took it for granted that husbands and wives were as happy as my own parents, with the exception of Aunt Bessie who grumbled at nothing, and Aunt Lizzie's husband who got drunk and threw things at her, a surely unusual case. *Vanity Fair* I read without the faintest suspicion of the intent of the note in the bouquet, or of Rawdon's reason for knocking down Lord Steyne. I thoroughly enjoyed that scene, although it seemed quite uncalled for.

One winter evening I was sitting over the fire engrossed in *Jane Eyre*, and had just got to where Grace Poole seems to be more than meets the eye, when Charles appealed to mother to take the book from me as being not very proper. She looked up, surprised, and then said, 'Oh, ah, yes, perhaps she had better not read it,' and took the book from me as suggested. Charles only meant it in fun, and was sorry that mother had taken it seriously, but the deed was done;

As a make-weight to our lighter magazines we took in the *Nineteenth Century*, and the elder boys read some of the articles. I struggled through one by Gladstone, in order to be able to say I had, but honestly I understood no single sentence. We were brought up in the belief that Gladstone was semi-divine, and to read an article by him ranked with reading the Bible.

However, Tom introduced a wholesome note of doubt on this point, and also on the absolute worshipfulness of Queen Victoria.

'I think she has had a pretty easy time of it,' said he, startling the tea-table, after one of mother's tributes to our beloved Queen.

'Oh, no!' cried mother, 'she has walked on the edge of a sword.' Thereafter I always pictured the Queen engaged in this absurd feat. I had been taken to see her once as she drove along Essex Road, and my memory of her made the idea of her walking on a sword merely funny. She was a shadowy figure to most people, but every one loved the Prince of Wales. He took a hansom once, and next thing you knew he might be in an omnibus. I asked mother what she would do if the Prince were to drop in to see us. 'I should offer him a little whisky and water,' was her immediate reply.

In the matter of religion as well as politics Tom knocked down a few family idols. My father was a dark horse in these directions, but now and again let loose a delightfully irreverent remark. A Wesleyan concert was billed 'to commence at 7.30 D.V.' 'Good Lord!' cried my father. 'Do they suppose the Almighty is going to bother about the time of their blooming concert?' But as a rule he let mother's piety have full sway. And it really did little harm, for it was concerned with externals almost entirely. Thus we were not allowed to put any other book on the top of the Bible. We knew the dreadful story of the little girl who couldn't reach a shelf, trod on the big family Bible to help her, fell, and of course died of her injuries. So you can imagine the shock I got when Tom spoke lightly to mother about Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel.

'Petroleum was what he poured on the altar. He had a secret store of it, as all those holy men had—Moses on Sinai, and every time there was "fire from heaven".'

When mother expostulated, Tom said, 'Well, then, where did Elijah get all that water when there was not a drop to be had?'

Mother was still unconvinced until Tom told her of a passage

in Maccabees, which explained the whole thing, and said where the petroleum was stored. He said that Elijah had no idea of humbugging the people, but thought God had given him this 'holy water' to use for His glory. At this mother was quite excited at the new light on an old difficulty. Still she was not clear how the petroleum caught fire. Tom looked round, saw me in the corner, and told me to run upstairs to the study and fetch Dym's magnifying glass.

'Now, mother, come out into the sun,' said Tom, 'and I'll soon show you.' In a few moments a piece of thin paper was scorched and actually alight.

'But Elijah hadn't a magnifying glass,' said mother.

'Oh, yes, he had. Those prophets knew lots of scientific facts, but kept them as holy secrets, entrusted to them by God, to be made use of for His glory. Look at their weather forecasts, their cure of diseases, their poison-antidotes. A magnet was a miracle.'

I was rather alarmed at all this, and was surprised to see how unhorried and really interested mother was. I half expected to see Tom himself struck dead by an outraged Jehovah.

In the summer of 1877 Tom started a new idea. Not content with our magazines, he suggested that we should make one of our own. Of course we took up the idea with fervour, and meetings were held to decide the paper to be used, the size of the page, the material and colour of the cover. Its name was *The Bee*, because it was to go from flower to flower collecting honey for its readers, as Tom explained in a poem on the first page. He, of course, was the Editor, Dym the science special correspondent, Charles 'our artist' and provider of light fiction. But there was very little light about the publication, in which everything was expressed as solemnly as possible.

We had no reproducing machine, so that it all had to be written in manuscript. In order to preserve uniformity of appearance Tom copied it all himself. He sat at one end of the study table, and it was a point of honour not to look. Charles did a water-colour frontispiece for each number, one of Canonbury Tower, another of St. Paul's from Merchant

Taylor's School playground, and a large number of pen-and-ink illustrations. I was allowed to do some little tail-pieces.

Tom wrote heavy articles in the style of the *Nineteenth Century*, on such subjects as 'The effect on Poetry of Science', 'The Penge Case', and 'The Ritualists'. Charles described Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and provided a serial story. Dym wrote on Voltaic Electricity, with diagrams of test-tubes and things, and on the Russo-Turkish Relations. I managed an account of a picnic in Cornwall, and a poem on my cat. I can remember pacing up and down my bedroom in torture of composition for my last line, which was rung out at last with more truth than rhythm. The final stanza ran thus :

*Of a very bad cough  
Poor Pinky died,  
But I must now finish off,  
Which to do I've often tried.*

Tom kept to himself that in the original her fatal disease was spelt 'coff'.

Tom got blood out of a stone, for he actually extracted a contribution from Barnholt. There was a symposium in the November issue on 'Flogging at School', on which each expressed his opinion. Barnholt produced no fewer than twenty-two lines on the subject. His opening remark was arresting: 'Flogging is a very good substitute for boys who will not work.' The burden of his article was that any punishment was better than endless detentions.

Each number of *The Bee* was placed by my father's side at the breakfast-table, that he might have the virgin glance. His genuine admiration and pride were ample reward for all our trouble. It was then passed round the family to be read in turn, and such care did we take of the five numbers we produced that they are still as clean to-day as when they left Tom's hands, and the fifty years and more have hardly faded the ink. I am still fond of poring over them, all except Barnholt's little essay, which I find too much of a human document . . . so many hours of his short life to have been spent in senseless detention !



## XIV

### *A Last Christmas*

THE jolliest winter of our childhood was in 1878. We had only given up making our magazine because real work was too pressing. Tom was at the last phase for his B.A. and Dym was in full hopes of his Cambridge scholarship. Charles had left school in order to give his whole time to his water-colour painting. Most of his days were spent in town, copying the technique of David Cox, Turner, and Muller, and we all looked forward to seeing what he brought home every evening. He had sold so many of his own original sketches that he confidently hoped to make his living in that way.

Of the four boys Barnholt was perhaps the happiest. Released at last from his eternal 'detentions', he had been taken from school and placed in a shipping office, with the prospect of next year fulfilling the dream of his life by going to sea. As mother had predicted, he was the first of us to earn his living, to have a real salary, to be a 'man of means'. I fancy that he had suffered a good deal from having to wear the other boys' left-offs, for the first thing he did was to buy quite quietly a new suit. I can see him now as he walked into breakfast in it. It was a grey tweed, bristling with newness, and we were all full of admiration as he went off with my father 'to the City', while mother proudly demanded to know what she had told us.

And I too was happy in the first flush of my school-days, involving important 'homework' at the study table. At my October birthday the family came out strong: Tom bought a papier-mâché pencil-box that shut firmly and had Chinese figures doing something on the lid. Inside were three compartments. In the longest of these Charles put five new lead pencils (ranging from HH to BB). In the middle-sized division

Dym put a penknife, and in the smallest division Barnholt put a piece of soft india-rubber. Mother gave me a pair of scissors to be entirely my own, and my father brought me home the loveliest umbrella ever designed. It was of dark blue silk, and had a carved ivory handle. He must have given a lot for it, and I could never bring myself to use it. I carried it to school every day firmly grasped round the middle, but never opened it. When I was driven, one day much later, by a sudden shower to loosen the elastic band and spring it open, what was my dismay to find the silk in shreds where my hand had worn it.

The pencil-box was the envy of my school-fellows. The boys were greatly tickled at the way in which I assigned a special pencil for use in the various subjects—a history pencil, a geography pencil, and so on. 'I say, Molly, lend us your Scripture pencil,' Dym would say, for he knew that was an H, and good for his geometry figures. They all took an amused interest in my lessons and my 'little friends', as they called my school-fellows. My father, too, used to ask what I was doing, and one day, by way of reply, I inflicted on him the recitation of a whole poem about Mary Queen of Scots. This began:

*I looked far back into other years, and lo, in bright array.*

I haven't the faintest notion now of what I saw in bright array, but the closing lines have stuck in my memory. They refer to the blood of the queen, and run thus:

*The noblest of the Stuart race, the fairest Earth hath seen,  
Lapped by a dog! Go, think of it, in silence and alone,  
Then weigh against a grain of sand the glories of a throne.*

Neither I nor my father thought of carrying out these instructions, but he gave me sixpence and said it was very good. He used to help me with my sums, going very slowly with his explanations and telling me about things they did 'in the City'. He taught me how to write quickly by never taking off my pen in the middle of a word, and gave me 'transubstantiation' to practise on. I aimed at copying his handwriting, which I still think the best I have ever seen. When he noted

my ambition he said, 'Yes, all right, only be sure you never copy my, or any one's, signature—never on any account, even in fun.' So he could be quite serious at times, but as a rule he couldn't resist taking me in, because I was such easy game. 'I saw a nigger in the City to-day who was so black that charcoal made a white mark on him.' How that worried me! But I took in as Gospel the story of the man who bought a bottle of hair-restorer, dropped it on the door-step while he was fumbling for his key, and spilt it all—only to find next morning a fine hair mat outside.

My ideas about the City were confused. Sunday showed me a peaceful wilderness, where one walked in the middle of the road. Barnholt's accounts were of crowds of people, and the following scrap of conversation between father and mother didn't help matters.

'Seen any one in the City to-day, Tom dear?'

'Not a soul, except old Herring.'

I pictured a herring suspended somewhere on a string across the street. Mother didn't seem in the least surprised at the lack of population.

To us one November evening there came a casual knock at the door, and who should walk in but Tony. Better than the comfort of being met at the station was the joy to her of giving us all such a surprise. As we crowded round her she explained that she had just 'slipped away' to spend a week or two with us. A telegram would seem to have been the natural thing to send, but in those days telegrams were nearly always reserved for disasters, so that the yellow envelope in itself was a shock, and care was taken that the person to whom it was delivered should be seated ready for the worst. Tony laughingly said she was sure of a welcome, and knew that mother could always throw up a bed.

She then disclosed that she had not come alone, but was to be shortly followed by a barrel of apples and a young pig, coming on by goods train. The barrel was delivered first and was installed in the china-closet near the front door, and we had full permission to help ourselves whenever we liked. The

young pig, technically known as a 'porker', arrived wrapped in canvas on the carrier's shoulder, and was laid on the kitchen table ready for cutting up. It seemed to involve the whole household in feverish activity for days. There was glory for the servants, since all regular work was pushed aside in the effort to find big earthenware pans, to fetch in saltpetre and treacle, and clean up. The boys were summoned to help cut the big joints, and to pack up some of them to be sent to relations. I helped chop up the small meat ready for mother and Tony to make into sausages and pork pies.

Naturally Tony wanted to see the shops, and as soon as the Christmas holidays began I was allowed to go with her and mother to the West End. Tony was all for taking hansoms. As she pointed out, a bus can be taken any day—a holiday was a holiday, and she didn't believe in doing things by halves. She argued that it is the regular expenses that one should worry about, not the occasional. So she took hansoms right and left, and I can still recall the luxurious feeling of snuggling down in a hansom between her and mother, to be wafted exactly where we wanted to go. I could just see the toss of the horse's head and could hear the klip-klop of his hoofs and the cheerful jingle of his bells. It is amusing to reflect now that the bells on a hansom were put there as a warning to pedestrians to get out of the way of such swift vehicles. Those were the days when a man with a red flag used to walk in front of a steam-roller. I wonder what Tony would say to the traffic in Piccadilly to-day. On one of her later visits to London I took her on the top of a bus, to see some of the life of the town. As I called her attention to this and that, she said, 'Don't ask me to look, dear. If I take my eye off the driver he will surely run into something.'

What she suffered in a hansom I can't imagine, for she had no control over the driving, even with her eye. But in 1878 the traffic was laughably simple, and the only likelihood of an accident was the slipping of a horse on a wet road. Even then the driver from his high seat could usually pull the horse to his feet again. But mother would never let the glass window

in front be used, however hard it might rain, because a sudden fall of the horse might easily throw us headlong through the glass.

A morning's shopping was all we could manage for one day, for, strange as it seems now, the big shops had no restaurants, no rest-rooms, no conveniences for toilet, however dire one's need. The first tea-shop was opened at London Bridge, out of sheer pity for lady customers!

Much energy was spent in restraining Tony from buying too many presents, for the shops were so enticing. We found it safer to take her for expeditions to Epping, Hadley Woods, and Kew. One day I was allowed as a great treat to take her up to Hampstead Heath all by myself. Inducing her to tell me stories, I distracted her attention (and apparently my own) from the route we were following. At a strategic point I stopped suddenly, looked bewildered, and declared that I had lost the way. In reality I had led her in and out among short lanes and little paths, to and fro, and was all the time within easy distance of the station. At first I enjoyed seeing how 'hurried' she became, but when she talked of looking for a policeman, finding a post office, and telegraphing to mother, I thought it was time to discover the station, and with a bright 'Here it is after all!' ushered her into the booking-office.

As Christmas drew nearer we had several evening gatherings, not formal enough to call parties, for the boys and their friends. Charles called them 'Robin Adair' parties, because a girl we knew used to trill forth this song on the slightest pressure. Aunt Polly would always oblige with 'Tell them they need not come wooing to me', occasioning many ribald remarks from the boys. Another song that became familiar was 'She wore a wreath of roses'. No one knew why she had this head-gear, and when the poor fellow saw her again she had changed it. 'Methinks,' he sang, 'I see her now, with a wreath of orange-blossoms upon her marble brow.' One evening my father was begged to sing a song, and what was our astonishment when he stood out on the hearth-rug and without any accompaniment gave forth 'The Bells of Aberdovey', in glorious rich

tones. Seeing every one's pleasure no doubt heartened him on, and his careless unconcern enabled him to get the full effect of the lovely Welsh words.

One of Tony's presents was a magic lantern, which she delivered before Christmas, so that the boys might practise it beforehand. Wonders are so thick to-day that no child can understand my thrill at the darkened study and the sight of coloured figures chasing one another in mid-air.

Everything combined to make this Christmas (the last we were to have all together) the best of all. Ambitious now with their acting, the boys attempted a real play—*Box and Cox*. Tom and Dym took the title-roles, and Charles that of Mrs. Bouncer. Happily for me there was no heroine, and I could enjoy it all to the full. There was Dym cooking a chop over the study fire, and only leaving in the nick of time before Tom came in all hatted and overcoated, and there was Charles always in a dither. The whole thing was a success, loudly applauded by the grown-ups, including Tony and several others. A magic-lantern display followed, and then we all assembled downstairs for the presentation of Christmas gifts.

This was on a larger scale than ever before. The boys joined forces to give me *Aventures d'Alice au Pays des Merveilles*. They were proud of this book because the translation had been done by Henri Bué, the French master at Merchant Taylors'. My curiosity was to see how he had put into French 'Off with his head!' and I was amply satisfied with the funny way he rendered it.

Barnholt guessed rightly that I wanted a more frivolous note, so he added to my pile a mouse that would run along the floor when wound up. All other presents have slipped my memory, with the grand exception of those we children gave my father. We had each bought him a book, and my vividdest memory of him is that jolly scene. There he sat, gazing at the pile of five books—too pleased to speak, too pleased to touch them.

The November of 1879 was cold and dark with fogs far worse than ever happen now. We used to look out to see

torches being carried, and making ghastly glares in the deep yellow. One evening my father did not return. He had been run over and instantly killed. They did not dare to tell mother. She went next day into the City to inquire, and was told by my uncle that Tom had been called away on business to Doncaster. And she waited somehow till two days had passed, when they came and broke the news. During the years that followed she used to sit in the dusk, in a chair facing the gate, as she had waited for Barnholt years before. I think she almost hoped that the past was only a nightmare, and that she would surely see my father coming up the garden path with his springy step, and would hear his familiar knock.







## I

*An Ordinary Girl, 1881*

## § I

*Your father, dear old chap, is always so anxious about you, and afraid of your becoming an ordinary schoolgirl, with an ordinary schoolgirl's tricks and mannerisms.*

THIS sentence is part of a letter from my mother to me in 1879, when at the age of twelve I was spending my summer holiday in Cornwall. The term 'old chap' was merely one of endearment, for he was only a little over forty, and to us children more like an elder brother than a father. He never worried us about our behaviour, so that any hint he let drop was the more significant. And when a few weeks later in that same year he met with a fatal accident, it was natural for us to treasure everything that we remembered about him. The particular hint quoted above was occasioned by a letter I had written home with several postscripts and facetious turns of phrase. I knew quite well that what he meant by 'ordinary' was the silly attempt to be extraordinary, and that he wanted me to be as simple and straightforward as possible. The same idea had been rubbed in by my four elder brothers, with less delicacy. So, paradoxically, I tried to carry out the wishes of these my household gods by being as ordinary and as little conspicuous as I could, suppressing a child's desire to shine by using grand words and witticisms—all that the boys summed up in the dreaded phrase 'trying to be funny'.

My mother's ideas for me gave a healthy make-weight. She was for encouraging any scrap of originality in anybody at any time, and allowed me to 'run free' physically and mentally. She had no idea of keeping her only girl tied to her apron-strings, and from childhood I used to go out alone in our London suburb of Canonbury, for a run with my hoop or to

do a little private shopping, and once even went to Cornwall by myself. Her precepts were extremely few and consequently attended to. 'Never talk to any one in the street except to tell them the way.' To back this up, lurid stories were told me of children offered sweets by a 'kind lady', or taken for a ride in a gig by a 'kind gentleman', and never heard of again. The mystery of their fate was alluring, but deterrent enough. When a little older, I was warned, 'If out late, walk fast and look preoccupied, and no one will bother you.' Why I should be bothered I had no idea, but adopted the line of conduct without question. One striking instance of the potency of fewness in commands comes to my memory. Mother came in rather agitated one day; she had seen some 'very dreadful pictures' in a shop in a side street not far away; she begged me not to walk down that street ever. Although curious enough to know what the pictures could be, I never dreamt of going to look. She showed even greater restraint in refusing to give advice; when I applied for such help she would nearly always say, 'Use your own judgement'.

Another policy of my mother's was not so commendable. She wished to make me indifferent to my personal appearance, provided only that I was tidy and had no buttons missing. She snubbed me once quite severely for remarking that I thought I looked nice in my new dress: 'It's no business of yours what you look like.' She told me that the moment any one put powder or paint on her face she was taking the first downward step. This was not from a moral point of view, but self-regarding. 'You have to keep on with it more and more because you look queer without it, and then when you get older you look like poor Miss Dossit.' This was a dressmaker who served as a helot in another direction, too: she was never punctual, and we had to say that a dress was required three days before it actually was, in order to get it in time. My mother drove home the moral, concluding with the remark, 'The Queen is never unpunctual'.

By common conspiracy, as I discovered in later years, all of them, father, mother, and brothers, kept me from any know-

ledge of the evils of the world. To-day this seems ridiculous, if not dangerous, but there was some wisdom in it after all, for my life all along has been fresher and jollier for being free from fears and suspicions. As for little points of *savoir-faire* I picked these up unconsciously from hearing the boys' comments on the behaviour of their numerous acquaintances. The characteristics of the girls who came to the house were freely discussed in the family circle, and I easily discovered some types that were not popular. There was the extravagant girl, who was always wanting to be taken out, making serious holes in pocket-money. There was the managing kind, who knew how to deal with men. There was the empty-headed silly giggling kind, bearable for only a very short time. The wonder-struck girl with big eyes, who said, 'Oh, Tom, fahncy!' to everything he said, lasted only a little longer. Then there was the intense and interesting type—'all right, you know, mother, for a chat, but not much as a companion for life'. Least popular of all, I gathered, was the aggressively sensible girl who was never taken in.

The family tea-time, when such opinions were let loose as we all sat round the table, was a pleasant and I think useful part of our education. The main work of the day was over and the family pooled what gossip they had got from school or books or friends, discussing future plans and telling the latest jokes. Mother, pouring out at the head of the table, liked us to chatter freely, but I, as the youngest, seldom got a word in and was often snubbed when I did. Thus, after venturing, 'I did well in French to-day', I had the chilling reminder from Charles, 'Self-praise is no recommendation'. If I related a joke, 'We've heard that before' would come as a chorus. Once when I confided to Dym that we had begun America, he called out, 'I say, boys, at Molly's school they've just discovered America'. In short, I was wisely neglected.

I say 'wisely', because at the private school to which I trotted off every day I was a person of importance. I shared with another girl the glory of being *dux*, as our Head called it. We took places in class, and the one who was top at the end of

the morning wore a silver medal. This nearly always fell to Winnie Heath or me. She and I were good friends and shared a hearty contempt for our teachers. The only things they taught us quite thoroughly were the counties and chief towns, dates of the kings, French irregular verbs, and English parsing. Since these were immutable and mainly irrational, they were unsullied by explanations and remained useful possessions.

One day Winnie came to school all flushed and excited, took me aside, and said, 'I've got an idea. Let's work at something for ourselves. Yesterday I came across in a book all about the different races and languages in Austria. You wouldn't believe what a lot there are—so jolly. And I thought, why not get the things we want to know out of *books*?'

'Splendid,' said I. 'Why, I've got lots of books at home. My brothers will show us where to find some things worth learning, and you and I can lend books to one another.'

We set about our new plan at once, and soon became quite intoxicated with this furtive pursuit of information and all our learned notes and diagrams. We would come to school bursting with news about such things as the cause of an eclipse, what the Renaissance was, the effect of climate on national character, the legend of Barbarossa. Dym lent a hand on the science side and Charles on the literary, although I had to warn Winnie that Charles was more imaginative than reliable. One evening Dym brought me a grand note-book of blank paper that he had bought for Optics, but didn't really require (so he said). This became for Winnie and me a joint magazine of treasured notes and illustrations, boundless in its range of subject. It seems ludicrous that at the age of fifteen we should have attacked knowledge in general in this way. The modern attempt to make use of this desire to dig for oneself seems to have erred in being over-organized and thus to have destroyed the mainspring. If Winnie and I had been presented by the school authorities with a full programme of work, lists of books of reference, access to a library, and proper time and place to work in, with judicious assistance always at hand—most of our zest would have melted. More in line with our

method was that of a schoolmaster who fostered a love of history in his boys by putting some attractive books on a high shelf and asserting that they were 'too difficult at present'.

As it was, we taught one another and 'heard' one another in odd corners of the school and playground, sometimes sitting on the stairs. In those old-fashioned private schools no one minded what you did, nor when nor where. Winnie was good at arithmetic, and at last made me able to face a complicated simplification of fractions, and indeed to get fun over seeing it come out. But we were both unable to fathom the reason for turning a division 'upside down and multiplying', although Barnard Smith explained it at length. We laughed and agreed to 'never mind but just do it'.

A few weeks later it was I who came to school brimful of an idea. It had been suggested to me by my eldest brother, Tom, who had seen that we were wasting energy by lack of any system. 'Winnie,' said I, as soon as I could get her alone, 'let's go in for the Oxford Senior Local.'

As I expected, she stood aghast, but under my pressure she soon caught my enthusiasm, and we approached the Head with our ambition.

'What, dears? What is this you say? The Senior Oxford? I fear this is quite beyond your reach. However, I can but write for particulars and then you can see for yourselves . . . far out of your depth.'

In a few days' time we were handed with a pitying smile the 'Regulations for 1882'. How queer the date looked, as if it were in the next century; and regulations for it seemed almost impious. We took the pamphlet to a quiet corner and eagerly ran our fingers through the many injunctions in types of varying emphasis, muttering them aloud and occasionally exclaiming, 'Not really impossible!' At last we reached the set books. 'Only a play of Shakespeare's and some Addison—Coo! We can do that. I know a good bit of Macbeth already. Infirm of purpose, give me the daggers,' I cried, seizing the Regulations and waving them in the air.

There followed crowded hours of joyful acquisition. Mother

helped with French in the evenings, Dym worked out for us any specially bad problem, and Tom gave us some learned views on the character of Lady Macbeth that we could 'lug in' as he called it.

Few of life's scanty triumphs have exceeded my reception of the parchment declaring that I had 'satisfied the examiners in the Rudiments of Faith and Religion', and (on the back) had satisfied them in several other large-sounding things, including, yes, arithmetic.

'Hm! they're easily satisfied,' was my brother Dym's comment on this last item. He was a mathematical scholar of Jesus, so of course . . . but the other boys were unstinted in their admiration of how their little Molly had been able to hoodwink the examiners in so many different things. I pictured these examiners, grave and reverend *signiors*, all bearded, gazing at my answers and leaning back with complete contentment—satisfied.

I WAS NOW AN ASSOCIATE IN ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD. How those capitals delighted me, and it seemed that I was entitled to put A.A. after my name. We were down in Cornwall when the glad news arrived, so that my many cousins were duly impressed. As I had left school at the end of the summer term, I returned to London that autumn with the idea that life's summit had now been reached.

## § 2

But mother had begun to think a bit, as mothers will, and when October brought my sixteenth birthday she took me seriously into the dining-room and began thus:

'Listen, dear. Now that the boys will soon be all scattered at their various work we shan't need such a big house as this. And we needn't be tied to London. Suppose you and I were to go and live together in a cottage down in Cornwall? Somewhere by the sea, such as St. Ives or Marazion—within reach of Tony at Reskadinnick?'

She paused, giving a chance for these magic names to take

effect, and then added: 'You could work at literature and read French with me. We could do lots of sketching. In fact we could do whatever we liked. You could have a horse and ride to all those parts of Cornwall that you've always wanted to see—Mevagissey, Zennor, Tintagel. Perhaps we might travel abroad, to Italy, Norway, Spain.'

'But how could we afford to——' I broke in, knowing how limited were our means, but she stopped me with,

'I have already talked to the boys about the idea, and they have assured me that we shall always have enough to live on—they will see to that.'

Then, looking away from me out of the window for a few moments in silence, she turned and said in a dull, careless tone, 'Or—would you rather earn your own living?'

I hesitated. Rosy visions of Cornwall and its romantic villages, possession of a horse (always a passionate desire), the sea, Italy and Rome, floated in my imagination. It must have been a bit of my father's blood that made me say,

'It's awfully good of the boys to say that, and I know they mean it, but I would rather be independent.'

Mother smiled and admitted that the 'lady of leisure' idea had been the boys' and not hers. I know now that she must have hoped for that decision; for it was habitual with her to load the dice in favour of the result she least wanted, for fear of influencing the choice.

In those few moments the current of my life was definitely set towards hard work and uncertainty, and although these two have been my constant companions, and several times I have been in very low water, never have I regretted my choice.

The next point to consider was how the earning of a living was to be done. In those days it was not considered the thing for a girl to 'earn', although she might toy with a little work. Any other career than teaching was practically unknown. For me it would have to be teaching in a school, since the word 'governess' had become a grim joke in our family. During my last term at school one of the girls had told me that a friend



of hers knew a girl who had actually become a B.A. We had both been awe-struck that a woman one might meet could attain such glory, but we neither of us connected this pinnacle with an ordinary teacher in a school. Indeed, I fancied that one just 'took up' teaching in the same casual way that I had taken a Sunday-school class last summer in Cornwall.

By the way, that bit of experience might well have given me pause. My cousin Lucy had been distracted by the vast number of children committed to her care on Sunday afternoons, and implored me to come and take a class. The section she assigned to me consisted of some forty children, aged from three to twelve, herded in a stale-smelling room, and supposed to be seated on long wooden forms. However, the only restriction to their jumping up or crawling about was the tightness with which they had been sewn into their Sunday clothes. Not even the death of Jezebel (the lesson appointed for the day) had any appeal, and my efforts to draw what moral I could from this story were continually interrupted by such remarks as 'Please, teacher, stop Tommy crawlin' on 'is best trowsies' and other intimate requests requiring immediate personal attention. Of course, truly Cornish, they wanted to know where I had come from, why I had had my hair cut short like a boy's, and what I had paid to have it cut. I was foolish enough to admit that I had come from London. This started a new excitement, and I was asked if the pavements were really made of gold, and whether there were lions there. Seizing this last as a godsend, I abandoned Jezebel and spent the rest of the lesson in the Zoo.

I suppose it was the memory of this at the back of my mind that made me say to mother that I felt a bit young to teach in a real school.

'Yes, exactly,' she replied, 'and it is only this morning that I've had a letter from Tony suggesting that you should go to the very best school that can be found, and that she will pay the fees, no matter how high.'

Tony was mother's favourite sister in Cornwall, an aunt who never knew how to do enough for us. She had been told

of the birthday choice to be put before me, had guessed how I should decide it, and was determined that her present to me should consist in a proper preparation. 'I know what she will say,' ran the letter, 'so look sharp and find a good school.'

Now it chanced that as I used to go along Highbury New Park to my school I had frequently met a girl on her way to the station, carrying books and obviously going to school herself. After a while we used to smile on one another and then came to saying 'good morning', and finally used to stop for a few moments' gossip.

'Where do you go to school?' was of course my first inquiry.

'The North London Collegiate, the biggest school in England, and the finest. You must have heard of it, and of its famous headmistress, Miss Buss?'

No, I hadn't, but I was not to be squashed, and she had to listen to my glowing description of our Prize-day.

'You call that grand!' she exclaimed. 'Why, who do you think gave away *our* prizes? The Princess of Wales!'

I had been duly impressed with this and with later information about the hundreds of girls, the examinations they were going in for, and the great assembly hall. I hadn't given much thought to these glories, but they came to my mind when we were wondering what school would be best for me. So I recounted to mother all I could remember about this big school, whose name, 'The North London Collegiate', had remained in my mind, as well as its locality—Camden Town. I also recalled the name of the head, Miss Buss. Mother thought that she might venture a note to ask for particulars. A reply came at once to the effect that I might enter the school, provided that I passed the entrance examination, that I obeyed all the regulations, and that my fees were paid in advance.

'Entrance examination?' said I, 'Won't it do if you tell them I've passed the Senior Oxford?'

'Apparently not, dear, for I mentioned it in my note.' I felt that I was indeed up against something big. What would they expect for their entrance examination?

An afternoon was fixed for me to attend, and taking the

train from Highbury to Camden Town I found my way to the school—a formidable-looking building. Seeing some steps labelled 'Pupils' Entrance' I went down them, told the first person I saw the reason of my appearance and was ushered into a room in the basement. Here I was provided with paper, pens, and ink, and various sets of questions which I could take in any order.

Keyed up as I was for something stiff, these papers seemed to me piffingly easy. As for an explanation of the tides, I knew much more about them than men of science do to-day, and drew beautiful diagrams to show how the water was piled up, in Biblical style, with no visible means of support. A blank map of Africa was to be filled in with 'all you know', and I was still busily inserting rivers and mountains, towns and capes, when all the papers were collected. I had floored them all, even the arithmetic, and sat back in a slightly supercilious mood. The very large and motherly official (addressed as Miss Begbie) who swam towards me looked a little surprised as she gathered up my stack of answers, and was almost deferential as she said,

'Now, dear, just make a buttonhole before you go.'

This was a quite unexpected blow. I confessed that I hadn't the faintest idea how to set about it, and thought that buttonholes just 'came'. Up went Miss Begbie's hands in shocked surprise.

'What! A girl of sixteen not know how to make a buttonhole!'

'Can't I come to the school then?' I asked in dismay.

'Well, possibly, dear. We shall see. But you must go home, learn to make a buttonhole, and come again this day week to make it.'

Mother was watching at the window for my return, and as she opened the door I exclaimed, 'I've failed.' How heartily she laughed when she heard of my disgrace. 'A buttonhole! Why, I'll teach you to make one in five minutes.' So indeed she did, and I practised the trick so assiduously all the week that even now I can make a buttonhole with the best. Meanwhile mother made me a little case to hold needles, cotton,

scissors, and thimble, to take with me, 'to look businesslike'. On the appointed day I appeared, was given a piece of calico, made my buttonhole, and went home. It seemed absurd to take the railway journey just for that, but it was a rule of the school that no girl should enter who couldn't make a buttonhole.

A few days later mother received a notice that I had passed, and might enter the school in January. On hearing this, a friend of ours gave me an introduction to a doctor's family living near, for the eldest daughter, Mary Worley, was one of the head girls of the school, and could tell me more about it. She very kindly called on me, asked me to her house and was friendliness itself. But as to the school she was vague. She had been there for so long that nothing struck her as unusual enough to mention, but she was sure I should like it all right. Although she was going to Girton, and must have been stiff with learning, she was so simple-minded and jolly that she gave mother a happy impression of the type of girl with whom I was to associate. We had many long walks together talking of this and that, but nothing definite about the ways of the school could I extract from her. She was pleased to find that I had done a good bit of Latin by myself and with my brother's help; she thought it would come in useful, and at her suggestion we read some Livy together. The book was laid open between us, we read silently, and the one who reached the bottom of the page first sat back and waited till the other turned over. She went slowly for my sake I am sure, but always sat back first, and I pretty frequently turned over before I had actually reached the bottom. She also said she enjoyed it. Altogether she was one of the best.

### § 3

The close of the year was a time of excitement not only for me but for the family at large, for the boys were at home, and usually during the holidays one or other of them would be suffering from 'purple fever'. This was the name we gave to

the periods of post-seeking, because Messrs. Askin and Gabbitas reproduced their notices in purple ink, and each one that was delivered by the postman brought on a general rise in temperature. Thus for instance one day, 'Listen to this,' Charles called out to the breakfast table, 'here's a fellow wants some one to teach mathematics, some French, to play the organ in chapel, and should be good at games. Where on earth is Rosscarbery? Fetch the gazetteer, Molly. It's somewhere in Ireland.' This was followed by a chorus of comment: 'You don't know beyond the First Book,' 'You hate games,' 'Yes, but he can play anything on the piano' (this from me as I pored over the map). For my part I thought each one that came a most desirable post, and had no doubt of my brothers' ability to undertake anything that was wanted. And my natural belief in their powers was increased by their testimonials. It fell to my share to copy these out, and I hardly wondered that the boys objected to this job, for the praise was fulsome. As we had no reproducing device I had to copy them all many times in my neatest handwriting, and soon came to know them by heart. The only one I can now recall is our old doctor's effort with regard to Tom. Evidently put to it to find something useful to say, he described him as 'a man of parts'. Tom was not allowed to forget this gem.

It was a standing marvel in the family how Charles ever managed to be appointed to anything. True, he had never failed in an examination, but then he had never been in for one. His form of application was extremely bare, and he expressed his age, not as twenty-one, but 'next year I shall be in my twenty-third year'. But if he could secure an interview he was all right. Tall, dark, and good-looking, extremely serious in manner, he could impress any stranger as being widely learned and experienced in life. I have never met any one who could make a wee bit of knowledge go so far. Of course he didn't attempt to deceive the family, and gave us amusing accounts of the tight corners he had negotiated. He once undertook to teach a boy Greek, and while the pupil was struggling with the early letters of the alphabet the master

was busy acquiring the later ones. But where he came out really strong was in anything to do with music or drawing and painting. Since the average school-master of those days was a blank in these matters, Charles was a useful man to have on the staff, and was allowed a free hand to teach as he liked. He had taught himself to play the organ by practising in the little Cornish church of Penponds, employing a small 'stamps' boy to blow for him. His first post was in that little Irish town of Rosscarbery, where the combination of school-chapel and parish-church was no less than a cathedral. Here he managed to get some music out of an organ, which was little more than an old broken box, with the swell destroyed, only two pedals that worked, and nearly all the stops gone.

My brother Dym was the exact opposite. Unless he knew a thing thoroughly he wouldn't teach it. Magnificent on paper, after continuous successes at school and Cambridge, he was poor at an interview, having not an atom of push. I remember his coming home once, a mixture of rage and mirth, to pour forth his feelings. He had been to see a headmaster who seemed dissatisfied from the first, and at last burst out,

'No, no, you won't do at all. You're too young, you have no experience and no degree.'

'No degree!' gasped Dym, 'but surely, sir, you noted in my application that I was a Wrangler?'

'Well, I don't care. I wouldn't have you, not even if you were a Senior Optime.'

In addition to his modesty Dym had the family drawback of looking much younger than his years. One day he called me up to the study to show what he had done to counteract this. He had actually got a post, and knew he could manage the work, but how impress the boys? I found him robed in his gown, with a pince-nez on his nose, flinging about the room, banging his board on the table, and throwing exercise books at imaginary boys, all accompanied by horrid frowns and vituperations.

'How's that, Molly, for looking grown-up?'

'Splendid! You'll frighten the biggest boys. But how can you see with those glasses on?'

'Oh, they are only plain glass. I got them for sixpence at Pocklington's; they're a kind of toy; I can keep taking them off and on, and wiping them, like this—gives me a gesture.'

It was a large school near Plymouth, and after a day or two he went to have his hair cut in a local shop. On asking the price he was told 'It's a shilling, sir, but we do the young gentlemen from the school at half-price.' Dym paid his sixpence, glad of at least one advantage of his youthful appearance.

He quickly gained the boys' respect, more on account of his cricket than his mathematics no doubt. But one great hulking boy was troublesome and had an admiring following of small fry. Dym waited his opportunity, and after some bit of veiled impudence from the boy, told him in very quiet tones to leave the class. As Dym had foreseen, he looked surly and remained seated. With lightning rapidity Dym stepped up to him, seized him by the collar, dragged him to the door, and slung him out far along the passage, resuming the lesson as if nothing had happened. He never had any more trouble nor the boy any more following.

My youngest brother, Barnholt, had methods entirely his own for getting on in the world. After being at sea for a year or two and passing his various examinations in navigation, he was at home for a brief spell in the throes of getting another ship. Quite content with a job he had secured, he had just signed on when an uncle offered him a far better position in the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. Was Barnholt annoyed at what he had missed? Did he call the family together to share his chagrin? No. He immediately went back to the captain who had taken him on, entered the presence in a deferential manner, and said with becoming hesitation,

'Excuse me, sir, for troubling you again, but mother thinks that before I join your ship I ought to have some reference as to your personal character, because——'

The sentence was never finished. It would not have got so

far but that the captain was rendered speechless for a moment. The gist of his reply (never fully reported at home) was that he wouldn't take Barnholt—not as ballast. Looking surprised and hurt, Barnholt got out of the office and wired his uncle that he was ready for the Pacific job at any moment.

Nothing ever perturbed Barnholt. We used to say that if he were told that St. Paul's Cathedral was walking down the street he wouldn't get up to look at it. And his curious mixture of self-depreciation and fastidiousness is shown by the following talk:

'Ever been in love, Barnholt?' I asked.

'No, Molly, and you may lay that I shall never marry.'

'But why?' I replied, surprised at such a determination, for he was a prime favourite with everybody.

'Well, it's like this—any girl who was fool enough to have me would not be intelligent enough for me.'

#### § 4

During the Christmas holidays of '82 it occurred to the boys that I ought to have a little relaxation, in view of the rigorous time I was likely to have at my new school. How would I like to go to a theatre and see a real play? My experience of acting had been confined to home and school theatricals. I had never been even to a pantomime. A scrap of doggerel summed up my knowledge of the auditorium:

*Silence in the gallery, order in the pit,  
The ladies in the boxes can't hear a bit.*

Mother was consulted, and thought it wouldn't do me any harm, especially as Dym said he would choose quite a small theatre and a funny farce—*Betsy* at the Criterion. Tom and Charles said they couldn't stand such rubbish, but would go somewhere else and join us at supper afterwards. The play itself has faded from my memory, but the accompaniments are still vivid. An anxious farewell from mother, as Dym and I stepped into a hansom, sent us off.



'Where to, Sir?' came a voice through the cabby's little window.

'Criterion.'

'He'll think we are out on the spree,' said I.

'He'll *know* it,' said Dym.

Mother had put me into my nearest approach to an evening dress, which Dym approved, so that I was not too shy when I sat in the dress-circle, and walked into the grill-room after the play. This was full of cheery people and a pleasant hum of enjoyment and hurrying waiters. I felt it to be like something in the *Arabian Nights*. We had hardly been bowed to our seats when Tom and Charles walked in and joined us. A low-toned chat with the waiter followed, while I looked with amazement at the wide array of knives and forks by our places.

'What can all these be for?' I asked Charles.

'You'll see. I'll tell you which to use as we go on; and remember you needn't finish everything up; it's the thing to leave something on your plate.'

Such a meal as I had never dreamt of was then brought along in easy stages. Never had I been treated so obsequiously as by that waiter. When wine was served I began to wonder what mother would think. It gave that touch of diablerie to the whole evening that was the main charm. To this day I never pass the 'Cri' without recalling my one and only visit to it, with those adored brothers.

I was to have one more treat before the holidays were over. Charles took me to German Reed's to see Corney Grain, who sat at the piano and chatted to the audience in a most intimate and engaging way. His description of a honeymoon-couple on board a steamer still comes to my mind when I am embarrassed by a public display of affection. They were sitting opposite Corney at the lunch-table, were holding one another's hands and gazing into each other's eyes. In order to avoid looking at them without turning too markedly away he had to aim his food into his mouth as best he could—with some casualties.

Corney's manner was solemnity itself, and his remarks about

the inconvenience of his own fatness were made with such serious concern that some ladies near me seemed quite annoyed by my laughing over it.

‘Don’t you mind those people,’ said Charles, ‘Corney likes to hear you laugh. That’s what he’s here for. I noticed him just now turn towards you and give a little smile.’

*Under Law, 1883*

## § 1

AND now for my first day in the grand new school. I was as proud of my season-ticket from Highbury to Camden Town as any girl of later days with her latch-key. On it was inscribed 'with the privilege of alighting at intermediate stations'. This amused the boys, for the only intermediate station was Barnsbury, where no one ever went; Tom said it was only poets and railway-passengers who 'alighted'. With this talisman in my pocket I was able to pass the booking-office as though it didn't exist, and mutter 'season' in an off-hand manner at the barriers—a taste of life indeed.

As I walked up Camden Road I indulged in rosy dreams of all the brainy people I was about to meet. Mary Worley would have gone with me, but the new girls had been told to arrive an hour later than the rest. Consequently Prayers were over and the school was absorbed in the quietude of work, when some fifty of us new-comers were ushered into cloak-rooms and thence into a large theatre-shaped room, to be instructed in the ways of the school. A melancholy official began to read aloud a number of regulations. She had only read a few when she suddenly stopped, pointed at a girl in the middle of us, and exclaimed,

'Take off that locket, dear.' (By the way, I soon noticed that every remark to a girl was followed by the word 'dear'.)

I can see that poor girl now, very red in the face, fumbling with the chain of her locket. It seemed that there was a rule forbidding any unnecessary ornament. This didn't trouble me because mother had kept me severely puritanical in this line, even reproving me once for wearing a ring out of a Christmas cracker. School uniforms were then unknown, so some restric-

tion in dress was no doubt needed, but the lack of politeness to that poor girl gave me a shock.

A gracious welcome was certainly not the note of this preliminary harangue, the main object of which was obviously to chasten our spirits, in case we should think the place a free and easy affair like the régime of the despised private governesses or schools to which we had been accustomed. 'No nonsense here' was the key-note. It certainly had an imposing effect on me, and I was impatient to get to work, although a little dazed by the many instructions. At last we were dismissed, with orders to go to the various Forms to which we had previously been assigned by letter.

'Whereabouts is the Upper Fourth?' I asked.

'You must not speak without putting up your hand, dear.'

'Sorry,' said I, and repeated my question with my hand hoisted.

'You should say "please" at the end of your question, dear.'

I tried again in proper style and was told,

'You will find the name of the Form on the door, dear.'

We dispersed in various directions, and presently I found myself alone, and quite lost. The passages were deserted. Through the glass door of each room I passed I saw serried ranks of girls at work. Nowhere could I find a room labelled 'Upper Fourth', although there were several other species of Fourth. Presently I caught sight of a little white-haired old woman, cap on head, and dressed in black rather the worse for wear. Some caretaker or cleaner or something, I thought, but she may possibly have noticed the names of the classrooms; I can but try. So I hailed her in a manner I thought appropriate.

'I say, am I going right for the Upper Fourth, do you happen to know?'

Glaring at me she exclaimed, 'Do you know who I am?'

'I haven't the faintest idea; I've only just come.'

'I am Miss Buss!' and standing back a pace she drew herself up to mark the effect on me. It was not at all what she expected, for I cheered up and said,

'Oh, then *you* are sure to know the way to the Upper Fourth, and I do so want to get there.'

At this suddenly her face changed, and with a little gay laugh she said, 'That way, child, down the stairs, the first door you come to at the foot. Run along with you.'

Thus, oddly enough, it was in my first encounter with Miss Buss that I saw several different phases of her strange personality: her insignificance of stature and attire (*natura et arte*), her pomposity when she desired to impress, her kindly good temper, and her instantaneous and delighted recognition of any one who was quite at ease with her. These points didn't strike me at the moment, of course, but on recounting the incident to a seasoned schoolfellow afterwards I learnt that Miss Buss positively loved any one who was not afraid of her, who would look her in the eye and speak out.

At the moment I was far more intent on the Upper Fourth than on the headmistress. I was craving to see those wonderful girls, as low down in the school as the Fourth, to whom the Senior Oxford was a bagatelle.

Well, I found that Upper Fourth, and the very word gives me a mental shudder even now. After my dreams of cultured teachers and keen-brained girls—how humiliating was the drop! An empty desk among some thirty others was pointed out to me, with a hurried 'Sit there, dear.' Something that seemed like geography was in progress, and the girls were being questioned round out of Cornwell's Geography, a textbook only too familiar to me. After an astonished taking in of the dreadful reality I relieved my feelings by a contemptuous remark to the girl in the adjoining desk. She placed a warning finger on her mouth, but was too late. The teacher had heard an unwarranted voice and beckoned me to her desk. Thrusting an open exercise-book towards me she said,

'You must sign, dear.'

'Sign? Sign what?' I asked in bewilderment.

'Write down "I spoke in geography" and sign your name, dear,' she replied, hurriedly resuming a question on the Well-land canal.

Soon there was a mid-morning interval, and I asked a girl what on earth this kind of thing meant. She explained that we had to write down what we had done wrong and sign our name every time we broke a rule.

'Yes, and then what happens?' I asked.

'Oh nothing more than that. We just sign.'

'Is that all? How my brothers will laugh!'

'Your brothers may, but *you* won't when your parents see at the end of the term "Reported for breach of Regulations—23 times". So look out.'

In what deep dejection I got home that day and tried to hide my bitter disappointment from mother! But mothers always scent low spirits, and she refrained from asking too much. I was glad that Tony was in Cornwall and need not know that she was paying such high fees for so little. I showed mother the list of Rules that had been presented to each new girl (as well as posted at intervals about the building). It was in small print and double columns, like the blue by-laws in the trams. Mother laughed and thought them 'rather excessive'.

Those were the permanent rules, but almost every day a new one appeared in a corridor, in large sprawling home-made lettering—such as: 'Broken needles must not be thrown on the floor.' They were so many that they ceased to attract attention and got caught up into the decorative scheme. 'I can't possibly remember all these,' thought I, 'so I shan't bother about them.' A few of them, however, still remain in my memory: Every book had to be covered (a different colour for each subject). No girl might bring a pen to school (was this to avoid ink-stains?). We were forbidden to get wet on the way to school, to walk more than three in a row, to drop a pencil-box, leave a book at home, hang a boot-bag by only one loop, run down the stairs, speak in class. As for speaking, it would have been easier to enumerate the few places where we were permitted to speak than those where talking was forbidden. The ideas were sensible, but why make rules about them? One felt that if a girl were to knock over the blackboard by mistake there would be a rule against it the next day.

Arriving early one morning I was alone in a corridor and chanced to drop my pencil-box. 'Thank goodness,' thought I, 'there's no one to hear it.' Hardly had this crossed my mind when the voice of Miss Begbie came from some distant cloak-room, 'You must sign for that, dear.'

The book in which all these crimes were recorded had an ominous title—'The Appearing Book', smacking not a little of the Day of Judgement. As the culprit was left to state her own crime, some amusing things were entered in the book that may well puzzle future students of nineteenth-century education. 'I marched with the wrong foot' was the way a girl expressed her failure to keep step. 'I was four in a row', 'I spoke in French', 'I called out in Latin'. A technical distinction appears here; to *speak* was to talk to another girl, while to *call out* was to answer before you were asked. 'I left my heart at home' referred to a diagram for physiology.

On the rare occasions of a Form's going half a term without a signature, it was awarded a Gratification. This was a half-hour to be spent in any way the girls chose. Only once did this boon come my way, and there was much hesitation among the class, and searching for some noble idea in the way of recreation. In a pause I exclaimed loudly, 'Well, I should like a romp.' Amid much laughter the others then confessed to a similar wish, and blessed me heartily as we all trooped off to the gymnasium and let ourselves go.

Now and again a girl who had collected too many signatures would have an imposition, a piece of French to write or learn, but this was so rare that I only once observed a girl doing it. And anyhow it was nothing to what might befall any one at any moment: this was what the boys called a 'jaw'. But I don't believe any boy since the world began has ever known what a jaw can be. It needed Miss Buss to give a full content to the term. I never experienced it myself, but heard tales enough of poor girls reduced to sobs and almost hysterics as they bent under the storm that went on and on and on.

In that big building there was one small room, near the front door, dedicated entirely to Miss Buss. Here was held

the Inquisition, for to this would be summoned any case of naughtiness with which a Form mistress had failed to cope. A narrow, dark passage led to it, along which no unlicensed person dare go. One day, during some nondescript English lesson, we were suddenly told to stand, and then 'pass out in lines after me'. Such orders were familiar enough, and we only surmised that the lunch interval was a bit earlier or something. Our curiosity was roused, however, when the long file headed towards the front door. We glanced at one another (there was no rule against this) conveying the idea, 'We surely can't be going into the street hatless?' Curiosity sharpened into amazement when the conducting mistress led us down the sacred passage. Searchings of conscience began. What had we done? Anyhow, it was the whole form, so together we could stand up to it. We were ushered, or rather squeezed, into the little room and managed to stand in respectful files. To our relief there was no sign of Miss Buss. But doubtless she was coming, for there was certainly something up. But no, and the mystery deepened as we stood in silence. I concentrated on the clock, as if it would throw some light on the matter, and it soon began to take on that fantastic look that any object does if you stare at it. Suddenly it seemed comic, and I was on the brink of a *lèse-majesté* burst of laughter, when fortunately from the door came the sharp orders, 'Turn. Pass out. Go back to your form room.' We returned to our English lesson as if nothing had happened, and no reference was made to our expedition. The most accepted theory in our lunch-time discussion of the affair was that it had been just idle ordering about, in the same spirit that induces odious people to command their dog to lie down, beg, 'die', and so forth, for no reason at all. We had forgotten all about it when, at the next English lesson, a few days later, we were told to write then and there a description of what we had observed in the room during the three minutes we had spent in it. It was a clever exercise, because we had no means of aiding one another's memory; but as a test of observation it was useless because we had been in too agitated a dread of what might be in store for



us to observe anything. I had to spin out all I could about the clock, but the girl at my side was writing busily. This was Bessie Jones, who was never known to do anything wrong. Her conscience had been so clear that she dreaded nothing, and as she had always been a Bluebeard's wife in her curiosity about the sacred room, she had spent her three minutes to some purpose. Her substantial essay was read aloud to us, while we others were held up to withering scorn for our lack of observation.

But not even the righteous could always escape. Even Bessie Jones was once summoned alone to the sanctum, and went off light-heartedly, *conscia recti*. 'She'll make you cry,' said her companions. 'Nothing shall make me cry; I know I haven't done anything' was her stout reply. A letter of complaint had been received from a parent, accusing Bessie of leading her daughter to loiter on the way home. The girls had taken one side of a square while the mother went to meet them on the other and became annoyed at missing them; there had been no lateness. Was Bessie allowed to explain this? No, the storm broke. 'I won't cry,' she kept saying to herself, 'I won't cry, let her abuse me as much as she likes.' But Miss Buss had a trump card; remembering that a few days before Bessie had brought an excuse for being late owing to her brother's sudden illness, she exclaimed, 'And fancy your behaving so disgracefully in the street while your poor brother is lying ill!' Now Bessie's brother was everything to her, and at this mention of him she collapsed and broke into sobs. That was all Miss Buss wanted, and she dismissed the 'penitent' without more ado.

The iron discipline of the school made things easy for those in authority. Every moment, almost every movement was ordered. Where supervision was impossible we were put on our honour. This was far worse, for to a sensitive conscience it was torture to decide whether the mutter of 'pardon' on knocking against a girl by mistake was to be reported or not. And often it roused a bitter sense of injustice. I wonder that any of us retained a rag of conscience, for it certainly did not

pay. For instance, one afternoon a week we stayed at school for a two-hour drawing lesson—a Pacific Ocean of boredom. We copied dusty cones and cubes in endless variety, but I can remember no single point or principle that was taught me. We were allotted ten marks, not for what we did in drawing, which mattered nothing, but merely for not talking. Thus, if you said ‘thanks’ automatically for a loan of india-rubber you took off one mark. But two girls who sat near me carried on a conversation all the time, yet took off only one mark. They salved their conscience by counting it as only speaking *once*.

Talking appeared to be the main evil, and of course the absence of it made the school seem an ideal of good order and ‘teaching’ an easy job. But the continual restraints and fuss had worse results than actual overwork. Even when we got home we were not free. There were little printed time-tables on which we had to enter the hour at which we began to work, the hour we finished, and the total time taken. We had to fill them in with pen and ink, to prove that they were done at home, for no ink was allowed at school. Then the parent signed them as a voucher of their being correct. Every morning they were collected, looked over by the form mistress, and filed for reference. The cupboards were crowded with them. The conscientious girl was fidgeted beyond belief, and certainly beyond hospitality if a visitor interrupted her work and put out these tiresome calculations. A slow worker came in for continual scolding for taking too long over her sums or what not. Meanwhile many put down just what they thought would look well, and needless to say the average mother signed it without bothering. I had an eye-opener one morning as to the simple procedure that passed muster. I noticed a girl going stealthily past the teacher’s desk, taking a dip of ink and returning to her own desk to fill in her time-table.

‘That’s not much use,’ said I, ‘without your mother’s signature.’

‘Oh, that’s all right,’ she blandly replied, ‘I’m signing it myself; mother’s name is the same as mine.’

There was no rule against forgery, of course, and it is

interesting to calculate how Miss Buss would have acted if this girl had been caught—perhaps no more severely than if she had been seen running downstairs. I am sure that the excessive attention required for trifling duties blinded teachers and pupils alike to the weightier matters of the Law. Common sense and kind-heartedness often had to give way to some pettifogging rule, as the following incident will show.

One day our form-room door was flung wide open and Miss Buss entered. We all rose, and she addressed us thus: 'Now, girls, you are going to have a lesson from a stranger. I expect you to attend well and be on your very best behaviour. Of course no one will fidget, or drop a pencil, or speak unless directly asked a question.'

Turning to the door she then graciously invited a young teacher, a girl of about twenty-two, on to the platform. A solemn-looking man with a beard followed and was given a chair. Miss Buss gave the order for us to sit, and then took another chair whence she could eye us all. The form mistress hurried off to another class.

The young teacher then shot forth at us in breathless haste a lecture on Townshend, unbroken by the slightest pause, let alone a question or a writing on the board. We looked at the man and saw that he was absorbed in taking notes. He surely couldn't want to know about Townshend? Then it dawned on some of us that he must be a kind of examiner. We had never heard of a teacher's being examined, and we naturally concluded that it must be ourselves he was making notes about. So we looked intelligent and managed to hold on to a fact or two. After about a quarter of an hour the lecture came to an obvious end, and the poor lecturer stood irresolute; her matter was finished; what could she do next?

Now throughout the school there was a system of 'cards'—a packet for each form with the girls' names on them. This was a capital device for helping a new teacher, or a visiting one. After asking a question she could read out a name and the girl would stand up if she could answer the question. The packet was also handy for testing a large class fairly, because

no one knew whose name would come next, and no one could be left out. It stood on each teacher's desk for use at any time.

When, therefore, Miss Buss saw that the lecture was ended she pointed out the packet to the young teacher and said with an encouraging smile:

'Now you ask any question. Then read out a name on a card and the girl will stand up if she can answer it.'

So the lecturer seized the packet hopefully and began, 'Where was Townshend born?'—following her question with the name on the top card. No one rose, so she tried another card, then another and another, but no one moved.

'After all, a man's birthplace is not very important. Can you tell me in whose reign he lived?' Name after name was called, card after card fell on the table. No response. Of course the lecture had been delivered so fast that it was quite excusable if these questions, and some others that followed, were unanswerable. But it was queer that no one attempted anything at all. The man went on taking notes, and Miss Buss was looking with disgust now at the teacher and now at us. In despair at last came the question, 'Can any one tell me anything at all about Townshend?' Again the cards fell without result and the poor girl looked on the verge of tears. Then to every one's relief the man rose and said that the time was up, and the visitors filed out, Miss Buss casting a withering look on the class as she left.

Fool-proof devices must be a special delight to Puck, for it enables him to come out strong. In this case, as may be guessed, he had popped the right packet of cards into the form mistress's hand as she was departing in hurried politeness, and substituted on the desk the packet of another form which she had brought in by mistake.

'But why, *why* didn't you say that they were the wrong cards?' she exclaimed, when we told her of the disaster on her return. She did not press the point, for she knew that it needed iron nerves to interrupt what Miss Buss had figured out to go smoothly.

Yes, smoothly and with the regularity of clockwork—that

was the ideal of Miss Buss, as she walked along the corridors continually, looking through the doors and seeing everything 'going on'. She told me (in later days) that she could tell even from such a passing glance whether or no the teaching and discipline were good. That very tidiness was a danger-signal, had she but known it; but there was no one to warn her, and her power was absolute. The danger lay not so much in our being fidgeted by small routine of externals, as by our being mentally fitted into a procrustean scheme. It was tidy for thirty girls to be all doing the same thing, and the chief enemy was the appearance of confusion (detectable through the door). As for confusion of mind, that didn't show so much and was overlooked. In my own case—fairly typical, I gather—hours of boredom were spent in listening to stuff I knew quite well; and yet at one time I was obliged for a week or two, owing to some time-table trouble, to attend a rather advanced German class, although I knew little more than *der, des, dem, den*. I was required to put a piece of English prose into German for homework. A kindly girl let me copy hers in the train, and so I rubbed along. It was no use for a parent to protest. Miss Buss had forestalled such a nuisance as this by making a rule on the Prospectus to the effect that the Head was the sole arbiter of what should be taught to any girl at any time.

'Taught' is hardly the word to apply to the text-book-and-water method that I endured for the first few weeks. At the same time I was kept so busy with one thing and another for 'homework' that there was no leisure for the least amusement. Several of us were high-spirited enough to find our own solace during our classes. One, a future artist, for ever chafing against the régime, developed a perfect technique; she would come early on the first day of term, secure a back desk, and then contrive to make her face look attentive while her mind was far away, and she left school after some ten years of this in the middle forms, 'quite unscathed' as she expressed it. She had acquired for life an enviable power of enduring boredom, and had always been 'good' in school hours.

We had no chance of pursuing any useful work during a

lesson, because the desks had to be clear of everything but the precisely needful. So I amused myself by studying the teacher's mannerisms in voice, movement of jaw, roving of eye, or nervous fidgeting with her brooch. Choice bits of careful English were also treasured, such as 'Commence at the commencement'. With imitations of these I regaled my fellows during the scanty times when we were allowed to talk. The girl who usually sat next to me would laugh on the slightest provocation, and it was my cue to upset her by moving my hand sideways in an impressive manner whenever the teacher said something more than usually fatuous. There was no rule against this gesture, though we amused ourselves by framing one that would meet the case: 'No girl must move her hand sideways in class.'

Marks were the life-blood of the school. No work whatever was done without them, so that a large proportion of time was consumed in assigning them, counting them, entering them in huge books, adding them, and checking them. Great precautions were taken against cheating, as if this were the natural thing to expect. Tests done in class were marked by one's neighbour. Each desk was provided with a board that could be fixed into iron sockets at the edge and form a screen, so that the next girl couldn't see what one was writing. After every test done in class there would follow a cascade of questions as to whether some answer might 'count' or not. Thus:

'Please will it count if 1488 is put instead of 1588 for the Armada?'

'Well, dear, give it a half-mark.'

One evening I spent an hour rather enjoyably in writing an essay. It was returned with one mark deducted for one spelling fault, from a maximum of two—no other comment. This injustice rankled long, although to work for no marks at all would have worried no one.

Of all the lessons French was the dullest. It is barely credible to-day that hardly a word of French was spoken. We had to buy an expensive and appallingly dull book by Van Laun, and prepare the French at home for his stupid exercises. When

we came to class we had to write out two or three sentences selected to test us, which were taken in and returned corrected. The bulk of the lesson consisted of so-called translation—a muttering of bad English round the class from *Picciola*. I hated that 'little flower' and cast a longing glance back at our merry time in my private school over *Les Malheurs de Sophie*—a book in lively French with funny illustrations all about a little girl who did gorgeously naughty things.

The study of a play of Shakespeare's was simplicity itself. We had to learn the footnotes given in our texts. These consisted mainly of foolish paraphrases of any lines supposed to be obscure, and it was in these notes, believe me, and not in the text, that we had to be word-perfect. However, in the matter of Shakespeare there was a worse thing than boredom—active irritation. So long as a teacher droned on with questions we could curl up mentally as soon as our turn was past. But one teacher fancied her powers of poetic declamation. Although we had the text open before us she would roll out the lines in an exquisitely modulated, soft, pleading style. Whereas with the dull teacher I could think of something else or enjoy the joke of her folly, there was no escape from this murderer of the old friends of my childhood—Rosalind, Fluellen, Aguecheek, Dogberry. . . . The Saul of dullness may slay his thousands, but the David of sentimentality slays his tens of thousands. I always wonder how Shakespeare survives these energetic spouters, who are more rife to-day than ever. *As You Like It* has never recovered in my case from that poetical soul, who would clasp her hands in prayerful attitude and incline her head from side to side, as she chanted the uses of adversity.

From all this it may be supposed that mentally at least our life was easy. But not so. During my first term I hardly ever had a good night's sleep. Every morning before Prayers we had to recite to the form mistress or one of the monitors a piece of poetry—a different kind for each day of the week: on Monday it was verses of a Psalm; on Tuesday, English; on Wednesday, French; on Thursday, German; on Friday, Latin.

I can picture how this neat arrangement appealed to Miss Buss, or whoever it was who invented the torture, for it was little else. Singing a Psalm in church is easy, but try to recite one in cold blood. The French was enjoyable, because mother learnt it with me and got me to pronounce it properly, so that even now some of the lines linger lovingly in my memory. German was the worst; it simply haunted me until I had staggered through it somehow, or signed for not knowing it. Only two lines of Virgil were required, but it made no difference whether one had done any Latin or not, and how most of the girls managed to learn them is still a mystery to me. At that time I supposed myself to be particularly stupid at learning by heart, for I would spend nearly an hour over half a dozen lines of Milton. But it was the anxiety that militated against memory, for I have learnt plenty of poetry in later life without any trouble.

Anxiety in some shape was always with us. In order to ease it, and have a little leisure in hand if a friend dropped in, we used to get our work 'forward' as much as possible. One girl carried this to such an extent that she worked as feverishly at getting forward as if it were for the morrow, and her only reward was that she had nothing at all to do on the last evening of the term. Miss Begbie told an amusing story of her little niece, who was found late one night kneeling up in bed:

'Whatever are you doing, dear?'

'I'm getting my prayers forward for the morning, Auntie.'

## § 2

It was just at this turbulent time of my life that our vicar called to persuade mother that I ought to be confirmed. She was taken aback, having never regarded me as old enough for that sort of thing. She had never been confirmed herself, as the ceremony was not on the map when she was a girl in Cornwall. Like the Communion Service, the Order for Confirmation was huddled away in the same small print as Forms of Prayer to be used at Sea. My brothers appear to have been confirmed at school, in absence of mind, all in the day's work,



for I can remember nothing about it. However, mother was quite willing for me to be 'done' if it was the correct thing, and it was arranged for me to attend at the vicarage once a week for preparation classes.

About half a dozen girls of the neighbourhood assembled round the old man's study table. His only claims to respect were a pompous manner, a kindly goodwill, and a long white beard. Nothing but platitudes ever fell from his lips. Owing to the solemnity with which he uttered the obvious, most of the energy of the class was spent in restraining nervous laughter, for none was required for thought. His main care was to make us word-perfect in the Catechism. This gave me little trouble, except the long paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, which seemed to me so much more cumbersome than the prayer itself, and so absurdly unnecessary that my mind positively refused to take it in. So I escaped it altogether by looking as bright as possible when the demand for it was looming. Thus it was assumed that I knew it and need not be tested. We were obliged to learn and recite even the questions, and I had some bother to keep a straight face in addressing the old man thus: 'My good child, know this . . .'

One day he actually indulged in a little Gospel history, apropos of a clause in the Creed, and passed round the familiar map of Palestine for us to see where Bethlehem was. Disgusted, I looked ostentatiously out of the window as it came to my turn.

'Do you not want to know where Bethlehem is?' he asked, in pained tones.

'I know where it is,' said I.

'Ah, but we can never be too sure of these things. You had better look.' So to please him I gave a glance.

Very occasionally he probed our minds. 'What is meant by "Ghost"?' he asked the member of the class who was mentally deficient. 'It's something that frightens you' was the hesitating reply, but as this was not a promising approach to what he had in mind he gave a curious cough and passed on to something else.

'You do not seem to know your prayer-book very well,'

was his reproof to the same girl as she was fumbling in the Psalms in search of the Order for Baptism.

'It isn't mine, it's my sister's,' she answered with confidence, leaving him again defeated.

I think now that he was more nervous of us than we were of him. Far more. All the time he used to fidget with a quill pen, and at one glorious moment, as he was assuring us that we were all miserable sinners and emphasizing this startling idea by dabbing the pen on the table, the bewitched thing took a flying leap across the room.

'You must not smile,' said he.

This finished me, and we all abandoned ourselves to joyful laughter. He hurriedly rose to pick up the pen, but I noticed a distinct grin between moustache and beard. Even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear. . . .

For our final class he asked us to write out for him any personal failings or evil tendencies of which we were aware, and especially our besetting sin. I accepted this task like a piece of school 'home-work', and set about it as if it were a French exercise. With earnest thought during the week I scraped up about a dozen failings. But which of them beset me I couldn't decide, so I let that point go. Indeed they were all flights of imagination, and I was not a little proud at having filled two sheets of paper about them, feeling sure that my list would be the biggest. It was.

When I handed it up to the vicar at our next class I was annoyed to find that not one of the others had got a list at all. And worse still they were on the high horse about it. To his inquiries they replied that their mothers had forbidden them to do it, one even muttering that 'mother thought it Romish'. And glances were cast at me as though I were a kind of Mary Tudor. However, we started our lesson and I hoped the affair had blown over. But as the class was dismissed the vicar laid his hand significantly on my paper, with the words, 'Kindly remain behind; I will see you alone.'

What followed is a black spot on my memory. Opening my wretched paper he very slowly rolled out my sins, one by one,

breathing after each, 'Ahh . . . mmm.' I have felt a fool often enough, but never such a completely silly one as during the rehearsal of those absurd 'sins'. Really it was he who was the fool, for not one sensible remark could he find to make about them. But the whole thing had one good effect. Never again could I take seriously any sense of sin, or desire to confess, or any such thing. The vanity had been purged, I had done my bit in this line, and had attained a kind of freedom of the city. If the mothers of the other girls had only known, they missed a grand opportunity of putting their daughters off the fascination of the confessional for ever. I have come to bless my own mother again and again for her policy of non-interference, which was risky, but as effective as that of Charles II, whom she used to quote: 'Don't hang him; give him rope enough and he'll hang himself.'

When the day for Confirmation was fixed I inquired at school whether one could have a day off for it. Then I learnt that Confirmation was one of the two reasons that were valid for absence, the other being the wedding of a sister; a brother's wedding apparently was not of sufficient importance. All I need do was to bring a note for Miss Buss to sign. It was therefore with confidence that I joined the morning queue of girls who daily brought excuses for lateness or absence owing to illness. Miss Buss, seated on her throne in the Hall, received, signed, and dismissed. I felt rather important at being a candidate for Confirmation, and expected a few words of pleasant exhortation. What was my surprise to find my mother's note received with a storm of abuse. Pushing it back into my hand, Miss Buss burst out:

'What do you mean by bringing me a note in an envelope? Do you suppose that I have nothing better to do than spend my time opening envelopes? What would become of my morning if all these girls brought envelopes for me to open every day? Why, I shouldn't have any time left for the serious work always piling up for me to do. Take it away. Go to the end of the queue and bring it again—open.'

I was too upset to care what comment she made on my

being confirmed, and it was as well, for she made none, but merely seized the note, signed it, and turned to something else. Mother seemed to get a good deal of quiet fun out of the episode when I told her about it.

### § 3

Coming into the school at the age of sixteen I saw its glaring faults and absurdities. The whole seemed to me an elaborate machine for doing the minimum of useful things with the maximum of fuss. I didn't see then, as I saw later, that Miss Buss was faced by a herculean task. The endless anxieties she caused her pupils were as nothing to her own big anxiety. She was a pioneer, and almost single-handed, in getting some kind of systematic education for girls. She had no school to copy, no precedent of any kind. Her private school had been so successful that she found herself before long with five hundred girls—all to be taught something and to be trained along Victorian lines of good behaviour.

To be taught something—but what? Negatively the problem was easy. All the hitherto satisfactory ideals of accomplishments and 'finishing' must be wiped out, but what was to take their place? While the education of boys had been gradually shaped from ancient times, engaging the attention of philosophers, that of girls had as a rule no other aim beyond making them pleasing to men. This idea was to Miss Buss anathema, and she failed to see all its great possibilities when really well done. To be deeply pleasing to a husband, and widely pleasing to other men, seems to me as good an ideal as a woman can have. But instead of facing squarely the real needs of future wives and mothers, as the vast majority of girls were to be, Miss Buss seized the tempting instrument at her hand—the stimulus to mental ambition afforded by outside examinations. By this means the curriculum was ready-made. And thus, for better or worse, the education of girls became a feeble imitation of what the boys were doing, for the public examinations made no distinction of sex, and no woman's voice was heard at the examination boards.

A more serious problem than the curriculum was the discipline. The girls came day by day from a great variety of homes, and never before had there been so many at work together. Here the example of the boys' Public schools was no help. Three essentials of their system were entirely lacking: games, effective punishment, and respectable learning.

I don't think it ever occurred to Miss Buss that games are far more than games, that they provide a vent for high spirits, develop natural obedience, and prevent mental overstrain. True, we had only a tiny yard of open space, nothing to call a playground, but there was a big gymnasium where games could have been freely played. All we did in it was Swedish exercises—bouncing balls or balancing poles—and marching round to music. Were they afraid that if we played free games we might start a riot? Even our short breathing-space of a quarter of an hour in the middle of a long morning's work gave us no freedom except to talk. We filed down into a basement room, bought a bun or a biscuit at a table as we passed, and then stood in *rows* till the time was up. I used to recall with a pang the jolly games of rounders in the grassy garden of my private school, whence we returned to work all hot and recreated.

Punishment as the boys knew it was impossible. Caning was out of the question, and detention was almost equally so. The bulk of the girls came from considerable distances, and the double journey for an afternoon school had to be ruled out. Consequently the lessons had to be over by half-past one, to allow time for getting home for dinner. But parents had complained that the girls had not enough to do during the afternoon and evening. Therefore, since hobbies were considered frivolous, the curse of homework was started. A detention would involve stopping at school for dinner, and an imposition would add to the already over-burdened homework, so neither of these was widely practicable.

Reproof, therefore, was the only form of punishment available, and it is hardly to be wondered at that Miss Buss had brought it to a fine art. It ranged from the mild disgrace of

'signing' to the third degree in the private room. Very rarely, I believe, expulsion was used. The knowledge that there was always a waiting list of pupils gave Miss Buss absolute power, and this must always be dangerous for a woman. Now by nature she was generous and kind-hearted, and did most sincerely long for the loyal co-operation of her pupils in making the school a success. To this end she delivered every week a moral lecture, and would frequently enlist our cheerful compliance with the innumerable rules. 'Multiply the results' was her great slogan for deciding whether a rule was necessary or not. She would point out that one girl running downstairs might not be dangerous, but what if five hundred did? One shoe-bag untidily hung doesn't matter, but five hundred look bad. One girl talking makes no disturbance, but five hundred do. The fallacy of this argument never struck her. Or did it? and that's why she repeated it so often? I think that her sleep must often have been broken by the nightmare of five hundred girls all running amok at once.

Underlying all this iron discipline must have been the subconscious fear that the assistant teachers could not carry on if there were much freedom for questioning and discussion in class. Hard as it is to realize to-day, a well-educated and cultured woman-teacher was extremely rare. It was in this direction that Miss Buss made her greatest mistake. Instead of searching far and wide for the best, she almost invariably chose women who had been through the school and could be relied on to follow her methods; no doubt from a subconscious fear that those methods might be called in question by some lively and original member of the staff. After all, fresh ideas are always upsetting.

Not quite so easy to understand was the objection to the teachers having any interests outside their work. Now it is obvious that no teacher, and no parent, can inspire children if he thinks too much about them; he must have some wider outside interest about which they must be left guessing. But for Miss Buss the school, the scheme, the orderly plan—this was the one absorbing thought.

### III

## *Bright Intervals*

FOR the first week or so I was definitely under a cloud, disappointed with the work and disheartened by the atmosphere. But as it was almost a point of honour in our family to squeeze as much enjoyment as we could out of everything, I soon began to see some good things around me.

I shall never forget my excitement at first seeing the great assembly hall. It seemed to have something of the splendour of the Merchant Taylors' Hall in Charterhouse Square, where I had so often been present at my brothers' Speech-days. To Miss Buss I think it represented all her glorious aspirations, and she had thought out every possible means of investing it with dignity. She could not have the dignity of the M.T.S. hall, with its flavour of great age, heroic men, and eminent scholars. So she wisely struck out on a different line. Everything of importance had been 'presented' and bore the name of the donor with a date. On the high platform was the throne. Behind this rose the great organ. At the other end was the gallery, with a medallion of the Princess of Wales, to commemorate her having opened the hall. A stained-glass window, in memory of some one, gave a cheerful bit of colour when the morning sun poured in. The rows of folding desks and benches were kept spotlessly clean, a contrast to the roughly handled forms at Merchant Taylors'.

On my second day I was present at Prayers, and saw the Hall at its main function. The idea of prayers at school was quite new to me, and I was certainly amazed. The girls came in from cloakroom or classroom, one by one as into church, and took their seats in perfect silence, while a voluntary was played on the organ. As soon as Miss Buss ascended the platform every one stood up, and then followed a hymn, a short reading from the Bible, and a short prayer. A lively march

tune accompanied our filing out in due order to our form-rooms. If Miss Buss had been content with these simple dignities we should all look back on that Hall with unmixed affection. But she required absolute silence in it, not only during Prayers, but also at any time during the day when pupils were casually passing through it, and they were in honour bound to report themselves and sign, if they had uttered a single word in the holy precincts.

During Prayers, however, a sterner vigilance was kept; honour was evidently not to be trusted; a teacher, prefect, or monitor was stationed over each form, to make sure that silence should be absolute. Now it chanced that the Upper Fourth had fallen to the charge of my prefect friend, Mary Worley. Imagine her dismay when she noticed that I made casual remarks quite freely to my neighbour morning after morning, while we sat waiting for Miss Buss to appear. Nothing would have induced her to order me to sign, but in the train on our way home she very tactfully approached the point:

'I'm a bit bothered, Molly, by the way you talk in Hall. The rule is quite a good one when you come to look at it. If they all talked there would be such a babel.'

'Of course there would,' said I, 'and I'll never do it again.'

My respect for Mary was enormous, and I kept my word, suddenly discovering that a good deal of fun might be got out of keeping all the rules, no matter how needless they seemed. Indeed, they were not much trouble when once you got used to them, and in this cynical spirit I became a model pupil.

One advantage of the school I felt immediately. Ever since my father's death we had been hard up. And I was quite miserably ashamed of it, in a way that modern boys and girls can't imagine. In those days people never dreamt of saying they couldn't afford a thing. Actual privations were as nothing to this wretched feeling. I didn't mind going without a summer trip to Cornwall or the sea-side, not having fires enough in the winter, never having a new dress (only 'passed-ons' from cousins), and dreading every order for a new text-book.



But I did bitterly mind that the girls in my private school should notice my poverty. For instance, one day the news had gone round that Mary Thomas had got a new dress, and I was elated, until one keen-eyed girl discovered that it was only an old one turned.

Now at the North London I sensed at once a different atmosphere. No one asked where you lived, how much pocket-money you had, or what your father was—he might be a bishop or a rat-catcher. Girls would openly grumble at having to buy a new text-book. The only notice taken of another girl's dress that I ever heard made a funny contrast to what I had experienced in the private school. I was told after I had left school that I had been a constant wonder for the length of time that one dress had lasted me, and that this had called forth admiration, not contempt.

Every now and again we were besought by Miss Buss, in her addresses on moral subjects, not to waste our parents' money by being extravagant with exercise paper or careless with books. One special delinquency in this line would rouse her to boiling-point. Since she couldn't track down the culprit she was obliged to pour forth her wrath on the school at large. A stall was opened every day on the premises for the sale of text-books, paper, pencils, and so on. Again and again it happened that a girl would buy a book, lay it down in the cloakroom while she did up her boots, and forget to take it home. A horribly efficient underling would find it and transfer it to the Lost Property Office. Here there always tended to be a great accumulation of goods, for one could only get anything out of it by signing twice—once for leaving it about, and again for not having a name on it. So naturally the girls preferred to sacrifice a good many articles. When Miss Buss saw an expensive new text-book among the unclaimed store she must have realized how some girl had cajoled her mother into giving her the extra money for another copy. 'Lying and robbery!' exclaimed Miss Buss in her moral lecture. But as long as the foolish rules existed she was beating the wind.

In my new-born enthusiasm for keeping all the rules 'for

fun' I discerned some practical advantages. I made a habit of getting everything ready overnight, so as to be unflustered for the start in the morning. Much wear and tear, physical and mental, have been spared me throughout life by always being 'ten minutes ahead of schedule'. Waste of time from being occasionally too early for an appointment has been amply compensated by peace of mind.

The advantage of strong discipline, too, was brought home to me during my first term. Some kind of theatrical display was being given in the Hall when suddenly the top part of the temporary stage began to give forth smoke. As this was before the days of regular fire-drill in schools, there was no recognized procedure. We all sat like graven images, glaring at the outbreak, frightened of the fire, but still more frightened of Miss Buss's wrath if we showed our alarm by moving or 'speaking in Hall'. As it was, the fire was quickly got under and the play proceeded. But Miss Buss seized the chance at her next moral lecture to praise us for our self-control, and to point out the dreadful consequences of any one person's showing fright in a large assembly. 'Sit tight and look calm,' said she, 'no matter how frightened you really are.'

Any incident from school life, or the newspaper, would be pressed into the service of those moral talks. It was the period of tight waists, when girls were vying with one another to get the smallest girth. One young society woman (Miss Buss told us in a solemn undertone) pinched her waist so much that her liver was completely cut in two! I always longed to know how they found this out, and whether she 'died on them'; but the story was sufficiently alarming anyhow.

The fallacy of the slogan 'Spending money is good for trade' was brought home to us by a hypothetical case: Little Tommy bought too many jam tarts and was ill. The confectioner was encouraged by his 'demand' to make more jam tarts. More little boys bought too many tarts and were ill, and so on. 'Who then,' asked Miss Buss triumphantly, 'was benefited?' The question was rhetorical, or we might have suggested both the confectioner and the doctor. But we gathered that the fewer

sweets we bought the more sweet-makers would be driven to some nobler work, and to this day I buy sweets with a sense of guilt.

It was not long after term began that I went home one day in almost a cheerful frame of mind, full of the news that we were to be taught some quite new subjects. Mother was properly impressed by the title 'Political Economy' of which even she had never so much as heard. But she was to learn a great deal of it before she was much older. Another subject called 'Domestic Economy' puzzled her still more, but sounded as if she would be quite *au fait* in it. However, she became meeker when I began after a time to talk familiarly of hydrogenous foodstuffs and carbohydrates. 'Foodstuffs!' she exclaimed, 'what a funny word!' The lessons were entirely theoretical, as there was neither kitchen nor laundry at our disposal, and I darkly suspected that our teachers had never entered such places. Now I could make a rice pudding blindfold, so mother and I were greatly tickled at my having to write down and learn a recipe for it. Her notion of a recipe is best shown by a conversation I heard one day. A dropper-in to lunch had enjoyed her pudding and began:

'How do you manage to get such good rice puddings, Mrs. Thomas? My cook is so uncertain—one day we can swim in it, and the next day we can dance on it. Do tell me exactly how you get it just right like this.'

'You take a pie-dish.'

'What size?'

'Oh, the ordinary size. Put some well-washed rice in it.'

'How much?'

'Enough to cover the bottom. Then add a bit of butter.'

'How big a bit?'

'As big as a walnut. Then add salt and sugar.'

'How much?'

'Oh, as much as you think will do. Then bake in a *very slow* oven.'

'For how long?'

'Until it seems to be done.'

The curious part about this recipe was the complete satisfaction shown by the visitor, who nodded her head at each item of information, for mother took care to emphasize the really important point. Nothing whatever remained to me of those recipes at school, nor of the elaborate menus for a family of seven, and I never had any idea whether my sons were consuming nitrogen or carbon or what.

Another new subject called 'Laws of Health' was far more attractive, for it involved lots of drawing. We had to draw lovely skeletons and lungs and hearts, with tubes in red and blue. Underneath we could put neat little 'keys' to show the observer what A,B,C, a,b,c, stood for. One day there was brought into the room a life-size model of the human trunk, which took to pieces. A bit was lifted off and behold the stomach with appurtenances. After a short exposition another bit was lifted off, with still more intimate revelations. Notes were dictated, but when we were told that the intestines were thirty feet in length I wrote down thirty inches, arguing to myself that thirty feet was an impossible length to get into one's body. When my note-book was corrected, the 'inches' was allowed to pass, but a mark was taken off for the spelling 'intestins'.

The one thing I remember from those lessons is the way in which the blood managed to get up the veins. Valves seemed to me a most ingenious device of the Creator. In doing my diagrams with such loving care I little thought of the use to which they would be put. Some years later I found that my brother Tom had captured my note-book, and with its aid had been able to give some lessons in physiology to a pupil in a Yorkshire town, where that same pupil is now a leading doctor.

Needlework should naturally have been included in the Domestic Economy course, but very little attention was paid to it. Whether Miss Buss, like my mother, had been so overdosed with it herself that she did not care to inflict it on the young, or whether she considered it a feminine and feeble pursuit, easily picked up at home, the result was joyful enough

for me. And yet, much as I hated the sight of a needle, sewing was the cause of some of my pleasantest memories of the school. Turning her back on the frivolities of embroidery, Miss Buss encouraged both plain sewing and Christianity by ordaining a Dorcas meeting once a month. To most of us it was a treat, providing a change from the usual routine. It involved a lunch at school and staying for the afternoon, with a possible game in the gymnasium thrown in. Surprise packets were prepared by our mothers and eaten, picnic fashion, in the dining-room, rousing envy among the girls who were enduring the school lunch. Since the work was more of a good deed than a lesson, we were allowed to talk a little within reason while we sewed. The only thing we had to sign for was forgetting to bring a thimble. I generally forgot mine, but Bessie Jones could always be relied on to have brought a few spare ones, in order to meet such cases.

For two hours we sewed horribly coarse cotton, of a dull biscuit colour and queer smell, with little blackish threads poking out of it here and there. It was to become in time chemises for the poor. We were not taught how to cut them out, for our mistakes would have been wasteful. Our duty was to join long stretches of stuff together. It seemed to me much the same as hemming, but the expert girls called it running and felling. Where did the pleasure come in? The reward for our noble work consisted in being read aloud to by the form mistress. As she was not required to improve us, she chose some jolly book that she herself liked, and we were encouraged to discuss any little point that arose in it, even while we sewed—a delightful change from the usual procedure of a lesson. Two of these books are still vivid in my memory, always recalling those cheery afternoons: *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, giving us a taste of a new kind of humour, and Aristotle's *Ethics*.

Even here marks pursued us. Since they were not to be taken off for talking in this blessed instance, ten or less were allotted for the amount of sewing we had achieved. At the close of the time the mistress went round to examine and

award. During one reading of Aristotle my whole output was some twelve inches.

'This is very little, dear, for two hours.'

'Ah, yes,' I replied, 'but the book was so interesting that I had to stop to think.'

'Ten marks,' said she with a grin, passing on to give my neighbour only five for an enormously greater stretch of sewing. But we looked at one another and laughed, for the Dorcas marks never 'counted'.

These joyful afternoons came only about twice in the term, but there was always some little excitement going on. Fully aware, no doubt, of the mental limitations of the rank and file of her staff, Miss Buss obtained the help of occasional outside lecturers, who gave us real contact with the science and art of the day. Lantern slides were then a rare treat, involving the darkening of the hall, a pungent smell and the joyful possibility of an accident, or at least a hitch of some kind, when the lecturer would call out 'next please' and get either no response or the next slide upside down. A man called Proctor gave us a course on 'The Birth and Death of Worlds' and 'The Life Story of the Moon'. As my ideas in these matters had been confined to those of Moses I found the new knowledge entrancing, its only drawback being that we had to write an account of each lecture afterwards.

Henry Blackburn, the editor of *Academy Notes*, gave us a course on modern art, far more fascinating to me than the astronomy, for instead of using a lantern he made drawings for us then and there, illustrating his remarks on good composition, perspective, the use of figures, and so on. I was able to jot these down, and mother and I went over them eagerly when I got home.

A certain Captain Speedy had just returned from Abyssinia, and gave us an amusing talk about it, dressing up, like a quick-change artist, as a general, a priest, a merchant, a courtier, and so on, and throwing in some amazing details of their religious rites, wedding ceremonies, and methods of commerce. He won our gratitude, too, by saying: 'I understand that you girls

have to write an account of my talk to you. Well, the very word Abyssinia means confusion, because the races are confused, the religion is confused, the mountains and valleys are confused, the climate is confused, and I know that I am confused in addressing so many girls. So the more confused your accounts are, the better they will represent the country and the lecture.'

The father of one of the girls was a sculptor, so he came to give us the story of how a lump of marble is gradually turned into a statue—a mysterious business on which we were completely ignorant. My chief pleasure in this consisted in the little bits of marble that he distributed among us with the hint that if put in the sugar-bowl they would cause much innocent mirth when a visitor stirred and stirred in vain.

These are only samples of the outside lectures that were liable to occur at any time, and hardly a week went by without one. But in addition there were two men who were habitués of the school. They were so unattractive that some of us fancied that Miss Buss had imported them to show us what men *might* be like. One of them came once a week to teach the upper forms composition. He seemed to use the lesson for venting some secret grouch. At first a few of us who were new to his ways took the trouble to write some interesting essays on the themes he set. But he seemed to derive pleasure from reading bits aloud and sneering at us for 'trying to be clever'. What else did he expect us to try to be? However, we could have borne the ill-tempered remarks if he had shown us how to improve, and had not mixed his remarks with a mouthful of biscuit which he was continually munching. We were quite glad when he washed the crumbs down with some of the sherry that always stood on the desk for him. One day, to the general astonishment, an essay received high praise and was read aloud to us all.

'How did you manage to get at all that stuff in the time?' we asked the writer of it.

'I copied it straight out of an encyclopaedia, just to see what he would say.'

That was enough, and thenceforth we copied from any book that we could find and took no more trouble with him. Round this man I have since woven an absurd fancy that it was a case of blackmail, put into my head by one of the Sherlock Holmes stories in which a teacher holds his post by this means. Miss Buss blackmailed by a sinister-looking man who drank sherry opens up exciting possibilities.

While this man aroused dislike and contempt, the other produced a boredom that was of a vintage unsurpassed by any that I have tasted since. For the last half-hour (1 to 1.30) every Wednesday the school assembled in hall to hear a sermon from him, preceded by a collect—always the same one, which ever since recalls to me, and probably to hundreds of others, the figure of a tall, thin, long-bearded, dark, cadaverous-looking clergyman, who spoke, all on one note, about Christian Evidences, possibly with the aim of making them so dull that we should never question them again.

During the last period of morning school we could stick to hard work fairly well, but to listen to dreary talk was another matter. Most of us had breakfasted before eight, and it was considerably past two before we could reach home for dinner. Bessie Jones has told me that she used to get back in such an exhausted state that she often had to lie down and rest before she could face her dinner. Well, one day during this sermon ordeal the girl next me fainted. I got her out as quietly as I could to some one who would attend to her, and then returned. When the address was over I was summoned to Miss Buss's presence.

'Why did you take that girl out?' she thundered.

'She fainted. What else could I do?'

'You meant well, my dear, no doubt, but you must never allow a girl to faint.'

When I looked my surprise, she added: 'Once I was in church with a pewful of girls. I noticed that one of them looked like fainting. I leant across to her, shook my fist at her and said: "*You dare faint.*" And she didn't.'

The choice of that particular clergyman for our weekly



sermon was the more surprising because Miss Buss seemed to take great pains to prevent our school-days from being dull. Exacting and often stupid though the lessons might be, there was always some little event on the horizon to look forward to. She gave 'at homes' to certain forms now and again, and the Sixth would give theatrical displays to the Upper School. But on two occasions in the year the whole school spread itself for special enjoyment. The merriest and most care-free day of the year was Foundation Day on April 4th. Since daffodils are then in season they were chosen as the school flower, and we were exhorted to bring as many as we could. The hall, corridors, classrooms—every available space was smothered in daffodils. How jolly the place looked compared with its usual severity. For in those days there were no pictures to relieve the blankness of the walls or to distinguish one room from another. No, that is wrong. In one room hung an illuminated notice, headed *LOST*. In pretty and varied lettering followed the information that there had been lost one golden hour, studded with sixty ruby minutes, set in sixty brilliant diamond moments. No reward was offered, for they were lost for ever. I was driven by some kind of nervous strain to read this again and again, and how I longed to write underneath 'Then why mention it?'

Well, on Foundation Day we lost as many minutes as we liked, and the day before was still better, for several of us stayed at school to help decorate. We were given plenary dispensation to talk when and where we liked, got into a thorough mess, and had an uproarious tea together, during which our austere teachers became as frivolous as ourselves. On the day itself the school was thrown open to parents and friends, for whom the main interest was an exhibition of toys made by our own hands and destined for a children's hospital.

While Foundation Day was mainly a gala for parents and pupils, the authorities looked upon Prize Day as the more important festival. Miss Buss always managed to secure some great personage for this—a member of the Royal Family, or a Church Dignitary, or a Celebrity of some kind. It was a gay

scene. Parents (of prize-winners only) were huddled into the gallery and upper corridor, while the whole school, dressed in the brightest garments possible, white for choice, filled the hall. Tables on the platform were loaded with books, for there was never any stint of prizes. Proceedings began with a speech from Miss Buss, detailing school successes, and then the Grand Person spoke a 'few words'.

During my school career there were three of these ceremonies, and I remember each as though it were yesterday. In my first year (1883) it was the Duchess of Teck who had consented to officiate. That was very grand and pleasant, but had its drawbacks for *us* that the Duchess would never have guessed. For a fortnight beforehand we had a morning drill in the correct method of approaching and receding from Royalty. After Prayers Miss Buss seated herself on her throne to act the part of the Duchess. Each prize-winner had to mount the steps of the platform on one side, approach, make a deep curtsy, receive a book and then retire (rather perilously) backwards to the other side of the platform and descend, without once turning her back on the 'duchess'. Now I had never curtsied in my life, and Miss Buss, with many an impatient 'tchah', made me do it over and over again until I would willingly have foregone my prize to be delivered from this public exposure of my awkwardness. Mother was much amused over my description of it, and since she could curtsy as to the manner born she soon got me into the way of it. How the Duchess would have laughed to see mother and me practising at home.

The great day was very hot, and we were all packed into the hall in good time, so as to be on the safe side, because 'Royalty was always punctual'. But the Duchess was late, Miss Buss showed signs of fluster, and we began to think there had been an accident. At long last there was a stately ushering on to the platform and bowing and smiling. The Duchess was a dear, for she inflicted no speech on us and gave us our prizes without the least observation of our manner of bowing. Mother (in the gallery) was amused to note that my much-practised curtsy

ended in a jerk from the waist and a hurried retreat foremost down the platform.

The broad homely accents of Bishop Temple warmed our hearts at a later Prize-giving. He assured us that girls were far cleverer than boys. 'Now my wife,' said he, looking round at Mrs. Temple as she sat nervously brooding over the piles of books she was to distribute, 'always says the right thing at the right moment. As for me, my efforts at speech-making consist of what the French call "staircase wit", or what you wish you had said as you go downstairs afterwards.' Every one must have rejoiced when this most human of bishops went to Canterbury. He deserved the highest honour, if only for his advice to the curates of his diocese. 'In making a sermon,' said he, 'think up a good beginning; then think up a good ending; then bring these two as close together as you can.'

It is absurd how an anecdote will stick for a lifetime when all the uplifting thoughts of a speaker are forgotten. In '84 our celebrity was Roby, of Latin Grammar fame. Perhaps he was none too good at mathematics himself, guessed what the average girl was like in that line, and so, faced by five hundred of them, he chose the following reminiscence (which I remember practically verbatim):

'It was during the Education Commission of '68 that I happened to be in the chair at one of the meetings. Sitting near me was Matthew Arnold, who had recently visited France to investigate the kind of education going on there. He was bubbling over with a New Method they had got. No matter what was on the agenda, he kept referring to it. It was a positively magical way of doing "Rule of Three" sums, called, so he said, the "Unitary Method", and was so simple that not even the dumbest could fail to understand it. He explained it so fully to us that we got quite confused, and at last, in desperation at the waste of time I said, "Look here, Arnold, I'll set you a sum, and you *do* it for us by this new method of yours." "Good," said Arnold, "that will be splendid." So I set him a good long one, with plenty of trench-digging and men with

unusual hours (you know the kind, don't you, girls?) and he retired into a corner of the room with it. We turned to our business and forgot all about Arnold. In due time we broke off to go downstairs for a tea interval. Presently a voice was heard calling over the banisters: "Roby, Roby, is this a *real* sum?"

## IV

### *Under Grace*

#### § 1

IF the weather during my first term might be described as 'cloudy with bright intervals', one day shortly after the beginning of my second term the sky changed to 'set fair'.

A school official burst into our room and asked in an offhand way, as though expecting no response, 'Has any girl here ever done any Latin?' I put up my hand, the only one, as well as I remember. On further questioning, I admitted having read a good deal of Caesar, two or three books of the *Aeneid*, and some Livy. These points were taken down and the official departed. We were so used to such sudden questionnaires, demanding statistics as to our birth-place, full Christian names, father's initials (if dead, put 'none'), and so on, that I thought no more of it, not even mentioning the incident to mother, the ever eager listener to the smallest items of news.

Next day at the mid-morning interval we were lined up as usual in rows, and indulging in as much talking as we could squeeze into the time while we ate our halfpenny buns, when Miss Buss entered. There was a slight sensation in the ranks, for her presence in the dining-room was unusual, and a stormy petrel. An underling in her wake called out 'Mary Thomas'.

'Now you're for it,' said the girl standing by me. 'What have you been up to?'

'I can't think,' said I, as I started off.

'Mind you stand up to her,' was the parting injunction.

Miss Buss was evidently in one of her unpleasant moods. But I was fairly comfortable in my conscience and looked her full in the eye.

'What was your last school?' she barked at me.

'Oh, only a private school,' said I in a deprecatory tone as an attempt at delicate flattery.

‘What is its *name*, I said. Answer my question.’

I gave her the name, but it obviously conveyed no idea to her, and I wondered why she wanted to know it. Then she shot at me almost venomously:

‘How long have you been learning Latin?’

‘I can’t remember. Mother began me when I was about six, and I have been doing it off and on ever since, chiefly with my brother.’ Then something in her expression gave me the clue to her ill-temper and induced me to add ‘Not much at the school’.

At this a look of relief crossed her face and she visibly relaxed, but pulled herself up again, glared at me for a moment or two in silence and then snapped out:

‘Go back to your place.’

‘What was the matter?’ was the inquiry of my neighbours in the line.

‘Nothing much. She only wanted to know the name of my last school, and exactly how long I had been learning Latin, just to fill in some of those eternal forms, I expect.’

On our return to the classroom I was ordered to take the books out of my desk and go to the Upper Fifth. This must mean a sudden ‘remove’, and staggering mentally under the idea and physically under the books I made my way to the room that was actually next-door to the Sixth! Here I was cordially welcomed by the form mistress and helped quite graciously to a vacant desk. A lesson was in progress on the derivation of French words. I found this amusing, for it was quite a new idea to me that other countries had ‘derivations’ for their words. I gained much kudos from being able to contribute several Latin words in the accusative, which appeared to be in great demand. Towards the end of the morning one of my new comrades was told off to show me what the home-work would be for the next day. I went home on the wings of an eagle, giving mother the full dramatic scene as I ate my dinner.

She and I turned with anxiety to examine the new home-work, and found it difficult in some ways, but not beyond our joint

efforts. Mother came out strong over a tricky bit of French composition, and the exhilaration of my 'remove' made everything seem fun to us. The mere look of the Cicero text (lent me for the day) was like the rattling of spears to the war-horse. 'Bless you, mother,' said I, 'for having started me in Latin so early, for that's what got me my move.'

The next day I felt more at ease and able to look round the room. The sight that attracted me more than any other was a girl with a mass of red-gold hair and, whenever I caught her eye, a jolly smile. We gravitated to one another in the lunch interval, and exchanged our names and gossip. This Mary Wood had known no other school, had been under Miss Buss since childhood, and thought everything perfect. She had reached the Upper Fifth as she said, 'in a proper and orderly way, not like you "by the earthquake".' I was glad she knew her *Alice*, and we soon found many books and tastes in common. When I demurred to so many rules all over the place, she told me that it was nothing to what they endured in the lower part of the school. Here a wooden instrument called a 'clacker' was in use for giving commands—to stand, put pencils down, 'hands away', pass out, and so on. It was used even for punctuation in a dictation exercise: one clack, a comma; two clacks, a semicolon; three, a colon; four, a full-stop. I had heard this clacker clacking in the distance and had wondered what it was. But I gathered that as one went up the school the discipline was relaxed bit by bit, and to my relief I found that learning daily portions of poetry was not required in the Upper Fifth.

There was an announcement one morning that Mary Wood was to have a day's absence for a sister's wedding, and would some one volunteer to send her the particulars of home-work by post? I immediately offered, and stepped up to my new-found friend to get her address. Only recently, while writing this book, I recalled this incident to her, and she said, 'Yes, indeed I remember it well, and the angry tears I shed at being obliged to stay away from school for even that one day.' Surely the oddest of reasons for tears at a wedding.

When the half-term holiday came mother asked me whether I would like to invite a schoolfellow to tea.

'Very much,' said I. 'There are lots of jolly girls, only I have no idea where any of them live.' Then suddenly remembering that I had Mary Wood's address in my note-book, I looked it up and decided that it couldn't be very far, for it was in Camden Road itself. So off I started to fetch her. But Camden Road seemed to stretch endlessly, and the numbers on one side bore no relation to those on the other. I persevered until I reached No. 267, and found it to be an imposing house with a large garden. Rather shyly I knocked at the door, little thinking how often I should come to it, how dear all its inmates were to become to me, and how I should be married from it.

Mary was more than willing to come back to tea with me, and insisted on bringing her shoes to change, in spite of my assurances that our family didn't mind mud. Mother was much struck with this bit of thoughtfulness, and took a great liking to Mary at once. There was a special tea for us, and Mary was delighted with the boys' study, and Charles's pictures and our family magazine. Thus began a friendship of over fifty years between our families, that has had no break nor even suspension.

## § 2

On the very first day of the next term we were informed that there were two vacancies in the Sixth, and the official added, 'Mary Wood and Mary Thomas, take your books and go.' Almost helpless with excitement and nervousness we stood laden with our books outside the sacred door of Room No. 1. 'You go in first', we exclaimed simultaneously, and pushing each other forward we fell in together, for the door had given way unexpectedly, and our books were scattered over the floor. The form mistress, Mrs. Bryant, was much amused and made some reassuring remark about such an energetic entry being a good omen.

From that first moment we found the atmosphere entirely



different from that of the rest of the school. We were privileged beings and felt that the whole place belonged to us. We were expected to behave properly, for, as Dr. Abbott said of his own Sixth, we were under Grace and not under the Law. Or, as Mrs. Bryant pointed out to us, the attitude of 'liking what you do' comes to the same thing as 'doing what you like'.

And certainly we did like what we had to do. We were considered capable of discussions in class and having opinions of our own. The history specialist made the subject quite a new thing to us, all about people who really lived, and 'policies' that acted or didn't act. As her Christian name was Sara she was dubbed 'the divine Sara', not so much in fun as in genuine admiration.

Our main comic relief was provided by a weekly French lesson. The grammar was assumed to have been 'done', and the chief business was conversation, carried on almost entirely by Mademoiselle herself, punctuated by *oui, oui* from us. A terror in the lower forms, to us she was just a lovable old thing. I think she was of a great age, for she wore a black wig, with grey hairs showing beneath it, and was extremely wrinkled. She liked teaching the Sixth, for there she could unbend without fear of disorder. Coming along the hall she would herald her approach to the room with shrill cries of 'Qui est-ce qui parle? Qui est-ce qui rit?' On entering she would throw up her hands in feigned amazement as she saw (what she expected) my broad grin—'Hélas! c'est la petite Miss Thomas!'

Her one bit of serious work was a *dictée*, in which we had far more words wrong than right, but that didn't seem to surprise or worry her. At the close she would say 'Qui veut épeler?' and always picked me out, no matter how many others offered. I stood by her desk, facing the class, and spelt out the French letters without any pause.

'Doucement, doucement, petite', she would insist every now and again, grasping my arm as if putting on the brake. Pretending to think that this meant 'softly', I lowered my voice still more every time she repeated it, but still went as fast as breath permitted—much to the joy of the class. When I looked

round panting and triumphant at the end, her face was always wreathed in fatuous smiles. I think now that this was the only approach to a joke that she obtained from her stolid English pupils, although she assured us that the *dictée* was always a droll anecdote.

Indeed, with nearly all the teachers I enjoyed something of the privilege of a court jester, for not only did I look absurdly young for my seventeen years, but I had my hair cropped like a boy's instead of being 'done up' like nearly all the others, and my famous dress came only to my knees.

It was in the Latin work that I felt the greatest advantage from my move. In the Upper Fifth the teacher had kept a crib on her lap for even the syntax sentences, and we were not allowed any variety of rendering. A fair copy placed boldly on the desk would have been respectable, but a crib on the lap, hidden (supposedly) by the desk, was quite another thing. Now in the Sixth we encountered a Classic mistress who was a mental aristocrat. She seemed not only superior socially to the bulk of the staff, but she knew her subject, and, more remarkable still, she knew the business of teaching. She might have stepped straight out of a public school or a tutor's room at the university. When we made a howler she just stopped in her tracks and looked bewildered: 'Surely, Mary, you would not use the indicative there? Of course . . . Have you any precedent for it?' Slips in gender and such trifles she treated with the polite disregard one would mete out to a coffee-spill at table—quick remedy with no fuss. She certainly, more than any one else, gave the Collegiate touch that justified the title of the school. She was the daughter of the R.A., who had executed the medallion of the Princess of Wales, and no doubt her artistic upbringing had heightened the effect of her natural good looks and vivacity. Meeting an old schoolfellow the other day I asked what she remembered of the school. 'Nothing,' was her reply. 'I can recall nothing except my admiration for Miss Armstead; we used to watch what she had on, because she dressed in such good style.'

More attractive to some of us was Mrs. Bryant, who was by

no means a clear teacher, but had the rare quality of inspiring us to work and think things out for ourselves. With her Irish sense of humour and kindly sympathy she gave a good balance to the masterful spirit of Miss Buss. Now and again, too, she would give us glimpses of her subversive political views. We had in the form a girl from Ulster, conservative to the bone, and it was very pretty to see a passage of arms between her and Mrs. Bryant, all the more entertaining because neither dared to be entirely outspoken. The spirit of *camaraderie* that existed in the Sixth between teachers and taught was quite a new thing to me, and all the delightful dreams with which I first approached the school were more than fulfilled.

The autumn term was to end with the Cambridge Locals. This was a different business from my Senior Oxford of the year before. A mere pass was nothing. Scholarships were awarded to the girls who got the highest places, and we aimed at distinctions. The scholarships took the form of remission of school fees. Now it chanced that my aunt Tony was in one of her low-water periods, owing to the vagaries of the price of tin, and although she would have screwed out the money somehow for me, mother and I were determined that she should not be allowed to. I knew, therefore, that I must win one of those scholarships or leave, and the competition was severe. Mrs. Bryant said years afterwards that we were the best Sixth she ever had. Anxiety, however, could not sit on me, and I gave myself up to the exhilaration and amusement of the whole proceedings.

The school presented so many candidates for Junior and Senior that it was a Centre in itself, and 'Cambridge Week' was an annual festival. The desks in the Hall were provided with inkwells, pens, clips, heaps of lovely new paper, and, of course, the dividing boards to prevent cheating. All candidates were required to sign a solemn declaration that during the examination week they would open no school-book, visit no friends or place of entertainment, go to bed at nine, and take the school dinner every day.

Easy—all except the last item. No doubt it was well to

ensure that every one had a substantial meal, but it was the fly in the ointment for me. Substantial that school dinner undoubtedly was. Instead of mother's home-made pasties or dainty sandwiches I had to face pieces of meat (animal unknown) swimming in straw-coloured water, with two soapy potatoes and a lump of warm greens, followed by a slab of suet pudding with treacle. The girl next to me on the first day had had previous experience of these meals, and had come prepared. On her lap she had spread a sheet of paper, and ever and anon she would transfer to it a lump of the pudding. She told me that it got bigger in her throat and swallow it she could not. 'I don't mean to try,' said I, and sat back. Presently an official bore down upon me.

'You must eat your pudding, dear; it's a rule of the school that nothing must be left on the plate.'

'But I can't bear those bits of suet that seem to ooze out and look at you; and I loathe treacle.'

'Then you should not have taken it, dear.'

'Well, they planked it down in front of me without a word; but thank you for telling me what to do. To-morrow I will refuse it.'

I was fortunate enough to be able to carry out this plan, and supplement the meat course with apples and pears provided by mother, eaten in secrecy and shared with my neighbour of the paper-scheme. I say 'fortunate', for if my refusal had come to the ears of Miss Buss there would have been an unpleasant time for me. Let alone fainting, she would not permit any symptom of illness or even weakness anywhere. Her demand for endurance and self-control was carried to a cruel extreme. Coughing was strictly forbidden, and small tortures were endured by both teachers and pupils in their efforts to prevent it. One morning I put a little handkerchief round my throat, as it was slightly sore. It met the eagle eye of Miss Buss. 'Sore throat! What nonsense!' she exclaimed, and pulled it from me. Any suggestion, therefore, that a girl couldn't eat what was put before her would have set the school rocking. I am inclined to think that the official who upbraided

me preferred to keep the matter to herself, for in a big storm no one knew who would get the blame.

Among the minor pleasures of life few can equal the excitement of being presented with a fresh examination paper, when you feel at home in the subject. Our set play was *Henry V*, full of pleasant associations with my father, who used to read to us the glorious brush between Fluellen and Pistol, giving us the Welsh intonation. And quite recently the bombastic speeches had been made lively for me by Mrs. Bryant. It was not her subject, but one morning she had undertaken to hear some of the memory work, and it fell to me to declaim 'Once more unto the breach'. I had hardly begun when she said 'Louder'. I started again. 'Louder' said she, in the same quiet tone. I started again. 'Surely Mary you can speak more loudly than that?' Well, thought I, she shall jolly well have it, and I rolled forth the words with all the strength of my lungs, expecting to be immediately hushed, for the noise must have penetrated into the hall. But there sat Mrs. Bryant, smiling and nodding approval, and the whole class looked round at me as I warmed to the work, and when I roared forth 'God for Harry, England, and St. George' they all clapped.

Full, then, of the play and its delights, what was my dismay to see the first question: 'Give the action of the play.' Just that, with no illuminating chat about it. I had not the remotest notion what it meant. Action seemed to mean 'doing', and all through the play they were doing something. I let it go and devoted myself to the explanation of queer words and contexts that examiners seem to like.

The writing of an essay under examination stress is always a severe trial. But Tom had given me two good hints: always choose the duller looking subject, because the examiner will be so bored with the others that he will be grateful for the change; and then think up your two opening paragraphs, and scrap the first one, which is naturally dull. The subject 'Names' looked the duller on the list, so I chose that. My first paragraph was to the effect that names threw a light on the history of the people, my second was to illustrate this by Cornish

names. So I scrapped the first and went straight to Cornwall, pointing out the effect of the Wesleyan revival on the names. I made great play with an old miner called Mahershallalhashbaz, always known as 'Lal'. And I made up a good deal else, reflecting that the comfort of an examination essay lies in the fact that you cannot be pressed for evidence of your statements.

I was one of the very few who took Drawing, and they set a grilling test—to draw a chessboard with four men on it. It sounds much easier than it is. But after all, my only real dread was the Arithmetic. Little hope was held out by the form at large that I should get through. 'Concentrate,' they all advised me, 'on one or two that you *can* do, and make sure that they are correct.' The paper was even worse than I had imagined, full of talkative sums telling you to neglect brokerage and things like that. But one stood out in simple honesty—a very long row of figures whose cube root had to be found. Now in my private school we had been shown how to do this by putting 300 on the left, 30 underneath it, and 3 underneath that. It made a pleasing pattern, and by patient attention to detail (which escapes me now) the answer unfolded itself in due course on the right-hand side. It would take time, I knew, but I went doggedly at it, and it came out! I fancy the examiner must have had a bit of a surprise, for I have never met any one since who could do this trick. When I told Mrs. Bryant of my triumph she exclaimed, 'Mary, you *never* did!' Then she added, 'I hope it has pulled you through, for if you have passed you shall begin mathematics with me next term.'

The joy of saying good-bye to arithmetic was tempered by fear of the unknown. What if mathematics should turn out to be worse? The completely unknown is never so fearful as the partially known. At my private school we had 'begun a little algebra'. This involved spending some two hours a week in turning complicated arrangements of letters into figures, with preliminary notes that *a* stood for 5, *b* for 7, *c* for 3, and so on. When the turning was done we added and subtracted as required and got an answer. One day I asked the teacher why they bothered to use these letters when figures were just as

good, and there were plenty of them. She told me I was impertinent.

My brother Dym was at home for the Christmas holidays, and as he knew all about mathematics I confided my fear to him, saying that as far as I could see algebra seemed to be a great fuss over nothing.

'Fuss over nothing!' he cried. 'Why, it's simply glorious. You'll never want to do anything by arithmetic when once you've smelt algebra.'

Never had I ever wanted to do anything by arithmetic, and was relieved to hear that it could be done without.

'Look here,' said he, 'I'll show you how useful algebra can be, even when you know very little of it.' And seizing a book he opened it at some problems, passing over with a gesture of contempt all the torturings of letters in the early chapters. Then he introduced to me the meaning of an equation, 'only a balance', and  $x$  as only the answer before you had got it. The questions about people's ages, price of pounds of tea, time taken to get anywhere—he worked them in a twinkling. It was sheer magic. Amused at my enthusiasm, he promised to give me a lesson every day. 'Just a little algebra and a little Euclid, so that you shan't go back to school a perfect blank.'

By the time the new year had set in I could solve any simple equation, however long and involved, by merely applying Dym's three steps: (1) Clear of brackets and fractions; (2) Collect all  $x$  on the left; (3) Divide by the coefficient of  $x$ .

But I soon perceived that it was the *making* of the equations that was the real difficulty, when you were faced by a long problem, and I asked Dym if he had any simple tricks in this line.

'No. For that you must use your common sense, if girls have such a thing. But I'll give you a tip that will carry you through a great deal: never forget that space equals velocity multiplied by time, and that the area of a triangle is half the height multiplied by the base.'

Geometry gave me little trouble because you could see what was happening. It was only when they proved the too obvious

that my reason tottered, as in that nightmare business of showing that one line standing on another makes two right angles, or else enough to make two. Dym, seeing my misery, said I might skip that, and I got on swimmingly enough through Book I. I was impatient for term to begin. 'Just for a last treat,' said Dym, 'I'll show you a funny thing. Do you think you could draw a circle through any three points I chose to give you?'

'Of course not. How absurd. Why, I might put two of them here on the study table, and the third at the North Pole. You said "anywhere", you know.'

'Quite, I shouldn't mind,' and fetching out a big sheet of brown paper and spreading it on the floor he said, 'Now put your three points wherever you like.'

When I had placed them as nastily as I could I watched him, entranced. 'Quite easy, you see, but you won't get to that until the Third Book.'

Then the blow fell. Results of the Cambridge Locals were out. No, I had not failed, I was among the top girls qualifying for a scholarship, and had got three distinctions, one in Latin. But there was a little after-note from the school secretary: 'We regret to tell you that your daughter cannot receive a scholarship since she has not been the regulation time in the school (two years).'

'Well, dear,' said mother, 'I'm afraid you must leave. But I think that as you have done so well they will probably allow you to leave without exacting the fees for the next half-term, which seem to be required if you go without notice. I shall go and see Miss Buss about it.'

I suppose the sight of my face made mother start at once, and she was back again much sooner than I expected, since I knew the difficulties of approach to Miss Buss.

'It's all right, darling, you are to go next term' were her first words before I had got the front door fully open, and then, 'Your Miss Buss is a marvellous woman.'

What happened at that interview I never entirely discovered, but from the scraps that mother conceded from time to time



I had curious glimpses of the two women, both of whom were accustomed to being treated with subservience and dread by their inferiors. Apparently the two Victorians immediately understood one another and entered into one another's special difficulties. Mother had been shown in at once, and the matter of the scholarship was dismissed in a few words: 'Of course Mary shall have the scholarship; we have a fund to meet such cases.' Then I fancy that mother must have thanked her very warmly, spoken highly of the school and of all that it had meant to me, and among other things said:

'What a delightful type of girl you have here!'

'Oh, *have* I!' exclaimed Miss Buss. 'You should see some of them! Mary's friends are the pick of the school.' Here some confidences followed that mother didn't pass on to me, but I guessed why certain girls who were rather noisy on the railway journey had mysteriously disappeared. The interview ended with Miss Buss embracing mother and saying, 'Mary is our link.'

At tea-time that day, when the episode was related to my brothers they showed great pleasure at my good fortune, but unanimously agreed that the 'fund' was no other than an invention of the moment on the part of Miss Buss.

'But she told me,' said mother, 'that an old pupil, now very well off, and grateful for all that the school had done for her, had given a sum of money to enable any girl who was hard up to stay on for an extra year.'

'A very clever touch,' laughed Tom. 'Miss Buss has the tongue of the ready liar.'

Quite shocked, I said: 'She would never tell a direct lie like that!'

'Oh, wouldn't she though,' said Tom. 'From all you say of her, she's far too good a sort to boggle at a little thing like that.'

I never heard all that passed in that fateful interview, but some time afterwards mother told me that Miss Buss had said, 'You won't keep Mary long.' This seemed to both of us supremely funny. And a curious by-product of mother's visit

was that whenever Miss Buss came across me in a corridor or on the stairs she would envelop me in an enormous hug. A group of girls who once witnessed this pretended to be alarmed — 'We thought little Molly Thomas was gone for good.'

### § 3

I began that spring term in the highest spirits, wondering especially what might befall me in the mathematics line. In the usual bustle of rearrangement of divisions there was some hesitation as to where I should be placed, as there were no other actual beginners. But for the first morning Mrs. Bryant said I might as well come along into her division 'as a visitor' until a better niche could be found for me.

'Just sit with the others for to-day, Mary, and we will see what can be done to help you. I am glad to hear that your brother has been giving you a few lessons.' She smiled on me encouragingly, and then announced that they were about to attack Book III, adding in an aside to me that it would be quite beyond me, but that I could just listen.

'We will begin the subject of circles with a nice little problem. Can any one tell me how to draw a circle through *any* three points?' (Her Irish pronunciation of 'any' made it seem extremely wide.) So saying, she planted three reckless points on the board and sat down to await replies. Puzzled looks everywhere, incredulous smiles, shakings of head, and my heart beating with excitement. Emboldened by the silence I held up my hand.

'No, no, Mary dear, you keep quiet, this is quite beyond you.'

'Yes, but I've got an idea how it could be done.'

'Well then, since no one else has a glimmering, you can come up and have a try.'

Walking up to the board amid the indulgent smiles of the class, I took the chalk and said:

'I think I should begin by joining up the points.'

'Good, so far. Do it.'

Having done this I stepped back for consideration and then,

'Next I should find the middle of each of these two lines.'

'Good!' exclaimed Mrs. Bryant, and the whole class leaned forward. After further consideration I ventured:

'I should draw lines upright from these middles.'

'Yes, yes, the proper word is perpendicular,' put in Mrs. Bryant eagerly.

'Then you see, where they meet would do for the centre of the circle.' Hands were now waving in the class, so I retired to my seat and left the proof to them.

That was a lucky coincidence, but it had its unlucky side, for I was expected to go on all right without any extra indulgence. But I thoroughly enjoyed the struggles over riders, and as for algebra, Bessie Jones was good at it and a tower of strength to weaker ones. A special charm of the Sixth was the licence we had to help one another. We could be trusted not to ask or give injudicious help, and marks were no longer of great importance. Consequently there was a general atmosphere of friendliness amongst us all, and a readiness to pool our resources. One of our number, however, was too unnaturally clever to be a great favourite. She knew every fact, could recall it at will, and use it to the best advantage. Once I remember she was dumb during a very interesting discussion of some question in history. In the cloakroom later she said to me, 'I knew a lot more about that business in India than Miss Burstall was discussing with us.'

'Why didn't you bring it out then?'

'I had been reading an article on it in the *Nineteenth* and knew several points that she didn't.'

'How splendid,' said I, 'but why didn't you bring them out?'

'I didn't want the others to know, because they'll come in useful for the examination.'

A better example than this could hardly be found of the evils of competitive work. Fortunately the bulk of the prizes in the school were 'standard' ones, that is, they were awarded to all who attained a certain percentage of marks. But a few were competitive, special prizes awarded on the result of an examination. Now to this girl, Emily, marks and prizes seemed

to be meat and drink. She always got every possible standard prize and usually the competitive ones, too. On Prize Day she used to stagger off the platform steadying the pile with her chin. As long as it was standard work she was able and willing to help any lame dog, and we were all proud of her attainments. There was a rumour that she could repeat the names of all the Popes, and backwards, too, if necessary. In short, she was our show piece.

One of the subjects for a special prize was Political Economy, with which I was fascinated. I taught mother all about rack-rents and diminishing returns, and between us we demolished every fallacy we could lay hands on. I got her to cut out illustrative paragraphs from the newspaper to paste in my notebook. Lessons with Mrs. Bryant were full of excited argument, and we all looked forward with pleasant confidence to see what the examiner could possibly ask that we didn't know. I may add that the few 'laws' still lingering in my memory have all been exploded now. This prize was the only one I ever worked for, and I was one of the favourites for the race. On the eve of the trial my backers gathered round me with the request: 'For goodness' sake, Molly, do come out top, we are so tired of seeing Emily getting everything.' I needed no urging, and felt like a Derby jockey being encouraged by the shouts of the crowd. The paper was an interesting one, and I felt to have floored it quite comfortably. Sitting back a few minutes before the end I glanced at Emily, who happened to be at the next desk, separated by the usual board. To my dismay she was still writing feverishly, and sure enough she beat me by four marks. Looking back half a century I am amused to think how much sweeter to me was the disappointment of the Field than any prize could have been.

I did once try for a holiday prize, but it was not competitive. Books were lavishly given to girls who did anything in the holidays, so great an evil was mere idleness considered. Mary Wood and I were looking at the list before the holidays and saw 'Needlework Prize'.

'Let's go in for that,' said Mary.

'Me! Needlework!'

'But look, there's a choice, you can make either a frock or a chemise. Surely even you could do a chemise?'

'Well, after all our Dorcas times I *could* do *that*.'

So we entered our names, she for a frock and I for a chemise. Since there was a regulation that the work must be unaided, I couldn't ask mother how much material to buy or how to cut it out. I guessed at the quantity of stuff, and imagined that cutting out must be quite simple; after all a chemise hasn't much shape, and you just cut it out. Laying the material fully out on the study table I slashed away with confidence, and showed the result to mother with some pride.

'I'm afraid, darling,' was her comment, 'that you haven't allowed for turnings. It will be a very small garment.'

Indeed it seemed to get smaller and smaller, for I had to keep cutting off bits to make both sides alike; but I put exquisite work into the actual sewing, literally spilling blood in my fervour. Charles's comment was pointed when he saw the small result, 'For the future, I take it?'

I managed to wash off the marks of blood, wrapped my treasure in tissue paper, and then in brown, tied it up firmly and gave it in. Mary arrived at school *in* her holiday task, a pretty brown woollen frock. When I told the boys they said what a good thing for me it was that such a test as appearing in it could not be applied to my chemise. Anyhow I won the prize, and chose Brachet's *French Dictionary*, which is a constant witness to my sons that I could sew once.

#### § 4

Although we were all very friendly together in the Sixth, Mary Wood's was the only house that I visited. She and I used to spend any half-term or odd holiday together, she with me and my brothers or I with her and her sisters. I had no sister, she no brother, so it fitted well, and all through life she has been more of a sister to me than any one else. We were never very emotional in our friendship, and that is perhaps why

it wore so well. Her people came from Shetland, and that always seemed romantic to me. Her mother used to tell me of the ways of the country people there, and these had the same tang of reality that we had in Cornwall. The inhabitants of Lerwick, she said, are not at all Scottish, but speak a mixture of English and Norsk. When my aunt Tony was staying with us she hailed Mary ecstatically:

‘Why, my dear child, you are thoroughly Norsk—the shape of your head, your peculiar type of golden hair, yes, and your ready laugh.’ It was a disappointment to Tony that Mary could not speak Norsk, for they could have conversed together—the rarest of treats for Tony.

Of Mary’s sisters I was rather in awe. The eldest was an artist who exhibited regularly in the Academy; but she was very jolly to us younger ones and amused us with acting and reciting. Another sister had been to Girton and was reading for a medical degree, and to this day I have not quite overcome my original fear of her. Mary also had a twin sister, whose chief ambition was to leave school and pursue her art studies. She never expressed the least interest in any school subject, having remained in the same slough of despond into which I fell on my first arrival, although (by some scholastic hydraulic pressure) she reached one of the Fifth Forms. But for the grace of God, I thought, or rather for my mother’s starting me in Latin, there goes Mary Thomas.

The person I ought to have been frightened of was their father. But I have never felt alarmed at a man, and although Mr. Wood was in aspect and manner quite forbidding, I took great delight in him, and I think he was surprised and amused to find any one to treat him so cavalierly. Full of fierceness and severity of criticism, especially against radicals and nonconformists, he would break his brooding silence at any moment with some caustic remark. At breakfast, buried behind *The Times*, he would read out a bit of the less cheerful news here and there. If Gladstone’s name occurred he would mutter in brackets, ‘Damned old scoundrel’. One morning, in a specially morose mood, he read out to the family the statistics of the

inmates of the workhouses: so many agricultural labourers, so many bank-clerks, so many plasterers. . . . Seeing the gloom round the table deepening, I broke in:

‘Does it say how many barristers?’

At this he ran his eye over the list again, looked solemnly at me over his spectacles and replied, ‘I see no mention of them. The truth is that there are so many that they gave up counting them’; and then he added that his net income during the past year had been fourpence-halfpenny.

When I was spending a week-end there he would take Mary and me to the Temple on Sunday morning, and before Service would take us into his chambers at No. 1 Hare Court. These were on the ground-floor and looking into the old court. Everything here had a peculiar attraction for me—the portraits of famous judges on the walls, the rows of Law books on the shelves, the musty aroma of the room, and, above all, the scope for imagination of all the fateful conferences and decisions that went on in ‘chambers’. I made up my mind that if ever I married it must be to a barrister, little thinking that by sheer coincidence that very room was to be my husband’s.

Mr. Wood’s dislike of nonconformity was very much the same as my father’s—an objection to anything openly perfervid in the religious line, but unlike my father he fell in with the Victorian custom of assembling the family and servants for prayers every evening. They were conducted in the same off-hand style in which he used to look into his hat for a few moments before the Service in the Temple. We read round a verse each of the Bible, during which my interest was absorbed in watching for Libby’s trouble with difficult words. Then followed a few short prayers, mumbled so hastily that I had the impression of his being ashamed to bother the Almighty and that he was hoping not to secure attention. A little girl on a visit there had been warned to be very quiet during the proceedings, and in the middle we heard a shocked whisper, ‘Mamma naughty bo nose’.

Libby had been their cook for untold years, and seemed to rule the entire establishment. Her name was the children’s

corruption of Elizabeth, and with them she remained to her dying day. Mary and Ursula (her twin sister) and I were not considered old enough to be present at the family evening dinner, and had supper by ourselves in the study; but Libby would always sail in with some tit-bits for us, such as gooseberry-fool or lemon-sponge. We could also make a raid on the kitchen at any time, and be sure of good sustenance from an over-indulgent Libby. The housemaid had also been with them from babyhood, for there were stories of her sternness in giving the twins their bath, allowing no splashing till the end, when she would exclaim, 'Now waller'. Her standard of morality was high and she never laughed, while Libby, a devotee of Spurgeon, would break into joyful smiles on any provocation, and I gave her plenty.

## § 5

During the summer holidays of '84, mother decided that I looked in need of a change. We hadn't been able to afford an excursion from home for two years, and she said we would have a bit of sea air now, whether we could afford it or not. She had heard that rooms could be had at a little place near Walton-on-the-Naze, called Clacton. The name sounded comic, like something in Dickens, and far from aristocratic, mother thought. The look of the place appalled us when we walked out of the station. Bare. A few houses were trying to look as if they were in streets here and there, with encouraging names put up. Leaving our luggage at the station we set forth to look for lodgings, and soon found some, with a view of the sea. Indeed, the sea had nothing to hide it from any of the houses. We engaged our rooms, told the landlady that we would have our luggage sent up, and then added that we should 'lunch out', so as not to trouble her at once. At this she looked a little surprised, but said nothing.

'Now, Molly dear,' said Mother as we stepped forth briskly, 'let us look for some nice confectioner's.'

We made for the commercial centre of Clacton, and certainly



found a few shops—a butcher's, a fancy shop, a greengrocer's, an ironmonger's with some pink and white crockery ware, and some other nondescript shops, but the nearest approach to a confectioner's was a small baker's stocked with loaves and some weary looking jam tarts. After these the town seemed to cease and we were getting into 'country' and half-made streets again. We looked at one another in dismay, for it was long past 2 o'clock and we were violently hungry. Presently, at a corner of two of the projected roads I detected another thing that might be a shop. It had little red curtains and some uncooked chops laid out.

'Let's try in here,' said I. 'At all events there are some chops that they could cook for us.'

We were told that we could have the 'Farmers' Ordinary', and were given seats at a table with a sort of cloth laid. As it was rather late we were the only customers, and almost immediately there was brought a plate of food each. I had no idea that the Potteries made such enormous plates. Even so, the huge slices of beef fell over the edge. Potatoes, cabbage, and Yorkshire pudding were ranged around in decent plenty, while the whole was awash with rich gravy. 'If this is a farmer's ordinary,' said I, 'what must be his extraordinary?' How we laughed as we picked bits here and there and found it really good; and indeed it would have been princely if there hadn't been so much of it. What was our astonishment to find the charge only 10d. each. This is the meal I picture whenever I see 'Good pull-up for carmen'.

We did not patronize the circulating library, for we had brought with us for evenings or wet weather a most exciting book, called *Progress and Poverty*, by Henry George, lent to me by Mrs. Bryant. His main point was that since the sea and air were free for everybody, so also should be the land. He was indignant at the preservation of fish by the landlords. Why should it be theirs? Does a salmon carry a label addressed to the landlord 'with the compliments of the Almighty?' I forget all the rest, but remember my conviction that nationalization of the land was so obviously just that no doubt George's views

would be put into force at once. Mother was not quite so hopeful on this point and seemed to think that it might take some time to carry out the idea.

What with our long tramps and our dip in the sea every morning before breakfast, we grew strong and brown and even a bit fatter. We returned after our fortnight to London to find Charles rather excited. He had left Ireland, where prospects were none too good, and had already secured a post at a school in Bedford, where he was to teach nothing but drawing and music. I little thought what difference that new post would make both to him and to me.

colour box. I think she was never bored when out alone. But I didn't leave her entirely alone when I went into school. When Charles returned from Ireland for good he brought back to Canonbury with him his much-loved Irish terrier, to whom he had given the absurdly grandiose name of 'Trevor'. On going to Bedford he had left Trevor in my keeping, since I had grown very fond of the dog and had taken him on all my walks in the neighbourhood. If ever I missed him I never worried, for he would always turn up in his own good time. So, of course, he went with us every morning on our walk to the school, and was jumping about in eager anticipation as soon as we got up from breakfast. And as I turned into school I liked to hear mother's cheery 'Come along, Trevor'.

On the rare occasions when mother was prevented from coming, Trevor would trot along beside me and beguile the way by making various investigations and bringing reports to me. At any point *en route* if I looked at him and said firmly 'Home' he would at once turn tail and trot back. I seldom took him the whole distance, but generally dismissed him at the Athenaeum, just before the last lap to school.

I found mother rather perturbed one day when I reached home as usual at about half-past two. Trevor had not arrived. She had been watching in the window, but——

'Oh, he'll be all right,' said Tom. 'Where did you see him last, Molly?'

'At the Athenaeum, about nine o'clock, when I told him to go home.'

'Then I'll find him,' said Tom, and started off. By tea-time he had returned with Trevor. He had found him lying quite patiently on the steps of the Athenaeum, and, of course, we never knew what had caused this break in his routine. It was in the following year that I took him out for a walk not far from Canonbury Park, missed him, but returned home, expecting him to turn up later. We never saw him again, and could never solve the mystery, for he had a collar, and was not valuable enough to be stolen.

The chief drawback to the no-train situation was the walk

back after school. I couldn't get away before about twenty minutes to two, and was too fagged to have pleasant mental occupation along the horribly familiar Holloway Road. I had Mary Wood's company for the first bit of the way, and used to cajole her to come a little farther, 'just to see the time by the Athenaeum clock'. This clock was painted a dark blue, as though to prevent its being seen, and this suited me because it involved Mary's having to come close up to it to see the time. Not, of course, that either of us wanted to know the time, but it was a good excuse for my having Mary's company for a few minutes longer. After that I had nothing to distract my mind from my craving for dinner. The halfpenny mid-morning bun had lost its effect and Holloway Road stretched endlessly. One of those days I remember absurdly vividly: Mary couldn't come on to the Athenaeum because there were friends to lunch and she had to get home at once. As I went up to her front door to say good-bye there floated through to me the smell of roast duck. No nearer approach to a barmecide feast has ever come my way.

One day I indulged in a tram along Holloway Road, so impatient was I to get home.

'You are back very early, darling. Have you been expelled or something? I'll have your dinner hurried up!'

'I'm so excited, mother; I've been made a prefect. We had an election this morning. We were all given slips of paper with the names of all the form, and we had to cross out all except the ones we chose, so that no one could tell who voted for which. There was a long talk beforehand, telling us not to choose our favourites, but the ones who would be best for the whole school.'

'But why the whole school?'

'You see, prefects are not like the mere form monitors, they help to keep the discipline all over the school at all times, and they wear a special badge with blue ribbon.'

That was about all I knew at first, but gradually I found that the prefects were a real power in the place. It was no doubt from the example of Arnold of Rugby that Miss Buss

sought to govern her school and set its tone through their agency. Influence rather than power was what she chiefly desired; there was to be no 'Jack in office' spirit; and although the prefects had full power to order any girl to sign, I can remember no instance of their exercising this power. How fully I now realized the distress of Mary Worley at my breaking a rule when she was prefect over me in Hall, and how wisely she had used her influence. I think the two ideals nearest to Miss Buss's heart were her Hall and her Prefects. She lavished on the latter all the little privileges she could think of, guessing unerringly the kind of thing they would appreciate. They were allowed to speak anywhere at any time. They came in at the front door instead of the pupils' entrance. Every now and again they were summoned to a special 'Prefects' Meeting', to discuss some difficulty that had arisen in discipline or school arrangements. Once I remember we were consulted about a girl in the Fifth who had become over popular, was uproariously clapped on going up for a prize, and was having her head turned. Another time the point was raised: 'Should teachers come to school on bicycles?' I remember giving it as my considered opinion that such a thing was undignified!

Miss Buss was far more friendly and confidential with her prefects than with several of her assistants, and obviously respected them more. But neither her prefects nor her most exalted assistants dared to tell her an unpalatable truth, as the following incident shows:

The weekly moral lectures, already referred to, were given to the whole school in detachments, about three forms at a time, in the theatre-shaped room. The Sixth had the same lecture, but since they must not be mixed with other forms, it was given to them separately in their own room. Topics of a general nature were treated in a vigorous way—loyalty, truth, courage, idle thoughts, and such-like. They were never dull, but one week for a change it was an entirely comic lecture, full of gay reminiscences and good jokes (jokes that seem good even in memory to-day). We of the Sixth rose to it finely, letting ourselves go with bursts of laughter, and I excelled

myself by prolonged whoops that the others used to call 'Molly Thomas laying an egg'. At each fresh outburst Miss Buss beamed with delight, and had some difficulty in keeping her countenance sufficiently to read her manuscript, and this totally new aspect of our austere head was a big joke in itself. At the end, however, she straightened herself up and warned us that such a frivolous lecture would not happen again.

But it did. Re-enter Puck. Next Monday as usual we were all set for the weekly address when in walked Miss Buss and announced that she had intended a lecture on 'Humour', but thought it would be better to give a few examples of it instead, and we settled ourselves for some kind of elevated discourse with illustrations from great authors. To our utter bewilderment we soon perceived that we were to have the identical lecture of the week before. Still, we hoped that there was some subtle humour in its opening in the same way. But no, on it went with the same anecdotes and the same pauses expectant of laughter. Well, I can laugh at most things, but all merriment was frozen, and I knew that no sound is more mirthless than forced laughter, or more easily detected by some one telling a chestnut. I gave a side glance at Mary Wood, and then at Bessie Jones, and they might have been at a funeral. No propitious moment arose for us to jump up and explain. Besides, there sat Mrs. Bryant, the form mistress and confidential friend of Miss Buss, looking as miserable as we were—even she didn't dare to interrupt, although every now and again she jerked her head at me as much as to say, 'Do for goodness' sake, Mary, get up and stop it.' That was all very well, but there were limits even to my audacity. So on went that lecture, drained of all life, the jokes that were funny the week before seeming stupid if not lugubrious. Miss Buss went on doggedly to the final word (a specially funny climax), looked round at us with disgust and swept out of the room. Mrs. Bryant hurried after her, and inside a minute they were both back and the storm broke. Miss Buss was never lacking in invective, and there was a good deal of it hurled at us, of which the burden was, 'Why didn't you stop me?' 'Why didn't *you*,

Mary?' was specially thrust at me, but Mrs. Bryant bore most of the brunt, deservedly I think.

Mother's comment on it was 'Miss Buss is such a great woman, what a pity she isn't a bit greater. If she had only come back into the room and had a hearty laugh over the mistake, what a real lesson in humour she could have made from it.'

'We were all dreadfully sorry for her, you know.'

'Sorry! That's fatal.'

## § 2

It was at the close of one of our holiday times, and Charles heard me boasting about my knowledge of the theatre.

'Pooh!' said he, 'why, you've only been once, and that was to a farce. You've never seen a real play.'

Annoyed at this, I asked him what he meant.

'In a farce you can hardly tell what's happening at the time, let alone afterwards. You can't remember the story of *Betsy*, can you now?'

I had to admit this. Then he added, 'you haven't seen what a play can be till you've been to a Shakespeare or a melodrama.'

'What's a melodrama?'

'It's difficult to explain exactly, but I'll take you to see *The Silver King* and then you'll know.'

Mother was very pleased for me to have this treat the last night before term; it would freshen up my brain. Charles was right on its being a perfectly new experience. Entirely unsophisticated, I hung on every word and gesture, completely entering into all the troubles of the hero, and I can remember the progress of the story to this day. How noble Wilson Barrett seemed when he pretended that he had signed the forged cheque! I understood then what Tom meant by 'lying well in a good cause'. As mother and I walked to school the next day I had to tell her the whole plot, and even now there is a bit of Camden Road that recalls to me the cry of the man who thought he had committed a murder: 'Oh God, put back Thy

universe and give me yesterday.' Mother was impressed by this, or else pretended very well, for she never appeared bored by anything I related.

Not very long afterwards I had a good chance for indulging my love of acting. The time drew near for the Sixth to perform a play to the rest of the school. A committee meeting, with Miss Buss in the chair, was held in the Library, to settle the great question—what shall we act? In recent years there had been scenes from *Pickwick* and *A Winter's Tale*, and a play of Molière's. We wanted to strike out a new line if possible.

'Any idea, Mary?' said Miss Buss to me.

Yes, I certainly had. My love of the Greek stories amounted to an obsession. Saturated with Church's *Tales from Homer*, even as a small child I had imagined myself Achilles as I bowled my hoop along Grange Road, smiting the Trojans hip and thigh. So

'Why not do the siege of Troy?' said I.

'But how could we do the wooden horse?' objected some one.

'And the burning of the city?' objected another.

The idea had taken root, however, and soon some one suggested that we could make Hector and Andromache the leading characters, and arrange a complete story round them. This looked more feasible, and plenty of ideas were offered. But Miss Buss saw a serious difficulty in providing the poetic language needed to give the thing the right Homeric flavour.

'I have a very classical brother,' said I, 'who could do the language for us, and he knows a lot about plays and how to make them.'

Fearing that this might be thought cheeky, I was relieved when Miss Buss said, with sharp decision: 'Tell your brother to come to see me.'

Whereas mother had come back from her interview with Miss Buss full of admiration and affection for her, Tom came home bubbling with laughter. That many-sided woman had become quite a different person when confronted with a young



man whom she was predisposed to like. After he had heard what she wanted done about the play and had promised to do his best, she said:

‘So you’re full of the Classics, are you? And now I suppose you’ll be pitchforked into some school?’

Tom was greatly taken aback at her expression, and replied that he supposed he would.

‘And I suppose you have not the faintest idea how to teach?’

Tom grinned acquiescence, but said he thought he could manage all right.

‘You young men have an easy time. . . . Now that sister of yours, if I don’t rescue her, is destined to the dreadful career of stopping at home and helping mother—dusting the drawing-room, arranging the flowers, and other horrors.’

‘I know,’ said Tom, ‘and mother and all of us want her to do something better, and you can’t think how grateful we all are to you for all——’

‘Yes, yes,’ she interrupted. ‘Now what I say is, Why did the Lord create Messrs. Huntley & Palmer to make cakes for us, if not to give our clever girls a chance to do something better?’

Tom didn’t tell us whether she hugged him, but I shouldn’t have been surprised.

Within a short time Tom had concocted a play for us, by selecting a few dramatic episodes from Pope’s *Iliad*. He rounded it into a complete story by writing a Prologue, to tell the previous events, and a final speech (to be delivered by Cassandra) prophesying the Greek wile, the Trojan debacle, and the burning of the city.

I bought a new exercise book, and took great pride in copying out the passages from Pope that Tom had selected, decorating them with drawings from Flaxman, to give the girls an idea of correct clothing and posing. Tom’s main job lay in the Prologue and Epilogue, and for these he felt that blank verse would be far more soul-stirring than rimed couplets. Up and down the study floor he paced, slowly declaiming the lines as he invented them, while I sat at the table taking them

down roughly, to be polished up and written out neatly afterwards.

The finished book created something of a sensation at school, as the girls crowded round Mrs. Bryant's desk to look at it. It was taken to Miss Buss, who presently had me summoned to her to receive her very warm approval and grateful messages to Tom. The next business was a meeting for casting the characters. Andromache was easily settled, for Ethel, Miss Buss's niece, was tall and beautiful, very dignified in bearing, and never known to laugh. Again, Hector was soon fixed, for Bessie Jones was not only tall and handsome, but had cropped curly hair, almost black—Hector's locks to the life. For the subordinate parts I was given first choice, and at once picked Cassandra, so that I might speak Tom's Epilogue.

Feverish work on the dresses was carried on in every available moment and spot. Even the sacred Library, where the head girls were preparing for Girton, had quiet corners of needlework industry. A Greek woman must have had an easy time with her toilet, for all she needed (so we were told) in the dressmaking line was a sack, open top and bottom, and provided with a couple of buttons and holes at the top so as to make three gaps; her head went through the middle gap and her arms through the side gaps, while the whole fell in graceful folds from the two buttons. With this hint we provided dresses for Andromache and all her maidens. The meaning of 'we' must not be pressed. My part lay in general encouragement, admiration, and advice, with a lukewarm offer to make a few buttonholes. A far more congenial task for me was helping Bessie Jones with her armour. The helmet was the worst, for it had to be strong enough to stand being taken off gallantly, and carelessly put on, and flashed about a bit to amuse Astyanax. What with donning and doffing we tested it so severely that it came apart, and had to be made all over again on a firmer basis. About this second one Bessie felt like Don Quixote—'so sure that it was sound and strong that it need be put to no second trial'.

The Greek 'sacks' were really beautiful in their varied

colours and materials. There was no machine available for the long seams, but the rate at which some of the girls worked filled me with amazement. One girl in particular, named Alice Codner, ran and felled absolutely like the wind, and merely laughed at my astonishment. When it came to Cassandra's dress Miss Buss herself went to Liberty's to select the material. She must have spent a good deal on it, for it was soft and glossy and heavy and of a deep saffron colour. When it was draped on me to get the right length I kept looking down to see the effect, for I had never been so gloriously clad. 'Hold up your head, silly,' said the girl who was measuring me, '*you* haven't got to see it.' My only contribution to it was to cut out in red material a border of the Greek key pattern, for some one else to apply to the edge. The idea was to make the whole as much like a flame as possible (in accordance with a kind of stage-direction from Tom).

Meanwhile, the rehearsing of the speeches was going on in other odd corners, and several times we stayed on for the afternoon to rehearse in the hall. I remember once coming suddenly on Bessie Jones lying prostrate on a form in No. 1 cloakroom, representing the corpse of Hector, while some of the best-looking of the Sixth were firing off their wailing speeches over her. The discomfiture of others gave me much amusement, for I was spared any rehearsing. I was not to appear at all until the end, had to speak by myself, without bothering about cues, so Mrs. Bryant said, 'I know you can fill the hall with your voice if you like, and if you break down from nervousness or forgetting the words, why that in itself will add poignancy to your speech.' So I only practised it at home to mother and Tom.

'Hector and Andromatch' (as certain of the Lower School called it when the bills were posted up) went without a hitch. Hector's helmet stayed the course, Andromache fainted on the wall in realistic style, the many maidens did their wailing so well as to draw tears from some of the audience, and Hector lay very dead, in spite of being maddeningly tickled by something on her up-turned face. Meanwhile, in the little room

behind the organ, Mrs. Green, our make-up artist, was laying herself out to make me look as blood-curdling as possible. How abandoned I felt when I looked in the glass and saw the tragic effect produced by Mrs. Green's paint and cunning touches under my eyes! I felt that I actually *was* the propheticess doomed to speak the truth and yet never to be believed.

The moment came. My excitement was stronger than my nervousness, and I strode through the mourners to the foot-lights which lit up the flame-effect of my saffron robe; then I let loose on the assembled school my prophetic vision, ending with stretching wide my arms at the words, 'And Troy is all a-flame!' Mary Wood told me afterwards that she and the girls near her were genuinely frightened, for the speech had not been dulled by rehearsing and came with all its fresh force.

### § 3

The serious business of my last year at school was preparing for matriculation. In those days it was something of a peak of achievement, second only to an entrance to Girton. About a score of us were to go in, and scholarships were to be awarded to the six who should come out highest on the list. I was disappointed to find *Caesar* among the set books, for Latin was my strongest subject, and I should have welcomed a far stiffer author.

The actual days of examination in Burlington House were a pleasant excursion. On the first day Mrs. Bryant took us all in an omnibus in very cheery style, and as she was an invigilator, the whole thing seemed no worse than a test in our own form-room. The Latin paper was absurdly easy, but what was my chagrin to find when I got outside that I had left out a whole paragraph of the despised *Caesar*. There goes my chance of a scholarship, thought I, and it serves me right for being so cock-sure about the Latin. As for the mathematics, my only hope there was to scrape through. Geometry and Algebra were not so bad—you knew where you were—so far in Euclid, so far in Todhunter. But there was a mixed grill

called sometimes Mechanics, sometimes Natural Philosophy, and this subject seemed to have no natural boundaries. A ladder against a wall, however, was always cropping up and could be understood, and the parallelogram of forces was merely common sense. But Dym had alarmed me by solemnly warning me never to confuse two things—mass and weight, I think they were. Anyhow, I was so confused about everything that mass and weight were mere flea-bites. My secret fears were as nothing to the paper that actually faced me. I gave a hurried glance through the page and a half of long-worded problems, of which not a single one seemed possible. A look round the room showed the other candidates applying themselves calmly. ‘Scholarship! It’s not even a Pass I’ll be getting!’ I shall never forget the dismal aspect of that room and how I dropped my head on my folded arms on the desk. But despair is a tonic and I braced myself for another look. After all, three hours are a good stretch, and I might manage some little bit of some question. As Livingstone appeared to Stanley, so did the word ‘ladder’ leap from the page to my searching eye. Yes, the good old friend was at the old stand of 60°. When put into plain English the examiner’s demands about it were quite easy. It was just like the lions in the path in the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and elated with my success I attacked three or four more questions.

Determined to squeeze some extra marks in some paper or other, I had prepared a map of the Mediterranean. This I had practised until I could do it almost blindfold, with Italy sloping the right way and the coast of Africa and the Black Sea complete. ‘Give the situation and modern names of the following’, one question ran. Suppressing a whoop of joy I put forth my map, and with the coloured chalks I had secreted in my pocket I put blue round the coast-line and red spots for the required sites, adding foot-notes on the modern names. Tom had advised me ‘always save the examiner trouble’ and there it was, the examiner had nothing to do but glance.

There was no stint of time, and the three hours proved far too long for the French, and every one had finished by

half-time. But it was one of Miss Buss's rules that we must not leave before the time was up, in case we should think of something we could add or improve. Envyng the candidates from other schools who walked out early, we North Londoners stuck to our desks, stared at the dirty windows, and grinned at one another until the weary time came to an end, too sick of our papers to look at them again. A workman coming to wind the clock and having to walk rather perilously along a ledge made a welcome interlude.

One of those days at Burlington House stands out painfully in my memory. To bolster up my chance of a scholarship I had entered my name for an extra subject (Drawing, it must have been). Such degrading things were relegated to odd hours and sometimes shifted about. Whatever the reason, I found myself obliged to stay one afternoon when I had expected to go home to dinner, as the rest of the North Londoners were doing. The trouble was what to do for dinner. I had only just enough money for my return bus fare. I couldn't borrow from a stranger, nor could I mingle with the other candidates who were having a meal in the canteen, and pretend that I didn't want any dinner. I thought of sitting among them and saying it was one of my fast-days, or the doctor's orders or something, but I knew that the sight of food would be too great a trial. So I returned to the now deserted examination theatre, hid behind a remote pillar in a corner lest any one should see me and beg me to come for some dinner, and waited. After all it was already more than half-past twelve, and I could easily hold out till two, when the examination would begin. As soon as I had something to do it would be all right—it was the blank waiting that was so trying. Unfortunately the rules of the school had forbidden our bringing any book with us, so I had nothing to distract my attention from my hunger. I raked my pockets to see if there were a bit of biscuit anywhere. Nothing! By 1 o'clock I was ravenous, and thought with sympathy of the lions at the Zoo roaring punctually at their feeding time. By 1.30 I had ceased to care whether I got a scholarship or not, rushed out and made for home. Mother was greatly

disappointed at my missing the examination, and as she plied me with food begged me to take a cab and go back. But I made out that it would be too late, for the expense of a cab all the way from Canonbury to Piccadilly was too great for me to stomach. Mother argued that an occasional expense never mattered, and implored me to go. But I stuck to my point about the time, too angry with myself for having wasted so much in that foolish waiting.

The appointed day came for the results to be out. Mrs. Bryant went to the University to get them and we candidates passed the time as well as we could until she returned. By a kind device the few who had failed were quietly drawn away and had the news broken to them privately, without the rest of us being aware of their absence. Then Mrs. Bryant came in with the remark, 'All in this room have matriculated.' Five of us were named Mary, so we were able to say that there was not 'one Mary Beaton'. We had had to stay till the afternoon for the news, but Mary Wood had promised to come home to tea with me, either to celebrate our triumph or to drown our cares. She had to call in at her own home on the way, first, of course, to tell the good news, and secondly to show me her new niece (the offspring of her sister's marriage aforesaid). We rushed up to the drawing-room to find Mrs. Wood 'in baby', and everywhere cluttered up with baby things. When we burst out with, 'We've passed the matriculation . . . we're members of the University,' we received the response, 'Yes, dears? . . . and did it love its Ganny den!'

'Oh, come on, Mary,' said I, 'let's get home to *my* mother, who knows what's what.'

Yes, mother had a big tea ready for us, with new saffron buns and apple-cake, and she kept on cutting bread and butter for us, and pouring out tea, and hearing all about everything to our hearts' content. I don't think I ever ate so much at a sitting in my life. I can see mother now, standing to her task of cutting and laughing at our continual demands for more.

A few days later I was told that I was high enough in the Honours list to be a Platt Endowment scholar, which meant

that I was to carry on my education somewhere else—all very vague, but I didn't mind much, for life at school was very jolly while it lasted. Mary Wood was to stay on at school and work with the *élite* in the Library, for she was destined for Girton. She was doing Greek, and thought that I ought to begin it, too; so she used to come over to Canonbury and give me serious lessons in our study, 'hearing' me the verbs mercilessly. When I flagged, she warned me that one never knew when a thing would come in useful. Mother backed her up on this point, telling us how all her life she had regretted not having learnt to speak Norsk when she had the chance.

#### § 4

Except Mary Wood, who was definitely fixed for Girton, we were all rather wondering about our future. Miss Buss took a personal interest in all her 'leavers', and had shrewd ideas about suitable careers. At this time a new opening for women attracted her attention—the instruction of the deaf and dumb. Clever and sensitive fingers were specially desirable for this work, and one of the girls at school in my time was well endowed in this way and seemed indicated as a pioneer. When approached on the subject, however, she repudiated the idea entirely. But Miss Buss was not so easily put off and pressed upon her again and again the glories of such a noble career. At last, annoyed beyond endurance, the girl burst out:

'No, I will not teach the deaf and dumb. I would rather be a . . . ' There was a pause and the expected word was 'hangman', but the word that came out was 'dentist'. This was a curious case of the subconscious mind getting a chance when one is in a temper; for she told us that on the way home, feeling calmer, she said to herself, 'A dentist? Whatever made me say that? Why, that is the very thing I should like to be!' She then went to Miss Buss to unfold her ambition.

'How absurd, child! There is no such thing as a woman dentist.'

Determined, however, to be a dentist if it were at all possible,



the girl got her parents to make inquiries. They drew blank in England, but found that there was a chance of admission in Edinburgh. They managed to send her to Edinburgh, where she came out head of the list in the final examination. Miss Buss of course congratulated her, and also showed generosity by acknowledging her own stupidity in having tried to drive her into a career she disliked. Truly Miss Buss illustrates the saying that 'personality is a tissue of surprises'.

The majority of us who had matriculated faced the fact that we should have to become teachers. It seemed a fairly pleasing prospect, mainly consisting, as far as work went, in talking and putting red crosses on other people's mistakes. But we now heard that you could be *taught* how to teach—a funny idea. Soon a chance arose for me to hear more about it. Along with some other enthusiasts Miss Buss was trying to raise teaching into a real profession, like Law or Medicine. To this end they formed a Society, called eventually 'The Teachers' Guild'. Of course, the most irritating stumbling-block to such a scheme was the amused indifference of man-kind. My brother Tom seemed to Miss Buss a promising convert, and in the hope of getting him interested she invited me to bring him to one of the first meetings of the infant Society.

So he and I made our way to the appointed spot—one of London's gloomiest halls (in Farringdon Street, as well as I remember). About a hundred earnest-looking people, mostly women, were percolating into the seats, and in due time the platform was occupied by a few men of weight. A bishop spoke at great length, and was followed by two public school masters—not over-enthusiastic. The weather was dull, the audience heavy-going, and the speeches in sympathy with both. But Tom could suck fun from the most unpromising material, and the more melancholy the speakers became the more absurd they seemed, and the more sidelong glances Tom shot at me. At last Mrs. Bryant rose to speak, and put some life into the audience with a breezy talk. She evidently was speaking from deep conviction and a full heart; but she became so involved in a tirade against the indifference of the world at large to 'this

great question', with many an 'if only' and 'if however', that Tom whispered to me in apparent alarm, 'She's forgotten her apodosis'. I believe the lady on my other side thought it was some part of her toilet.

Probably Miss Buss and Mrs. Bryant were disappointed with that meeting. They were doers rather than talkers, and a new scheme was fertilizing in their busy brains. 'Here we are,' they were saying, 'with a big school, and a deplorable deficiency of really good teachers. Let us pick a few of our best girls and venture some money in training them properly for their work.' The Training Colleges already in being did not satisfy their ideals, and they looked round for some appropriate place and for some appropriate person. Undoubtedly Cambridge, with its colleges for women as encouragement, was the right background for general culture. And a certain Miss E. P. Hughes, one of the most brilliant of Newnham's graduates, was the exactly right one to be the Principal. To her could be entrusted the entire working out of the scheme.

Of course I knew nothing at the time of all this activity behind the scenes. The first news of it that reached me was that I had been selected as one of the four North Londoners who were to be among the first students in 'a new college at Cambridge'.

## VI

### *Breaking Fresh Ground, 1885*

#### § I

CAMBRIDGE! From early childhood the word had borne a magic charm. It must have affected me somehow through mother, whose dream it had always been to have a son at Cambridge. I shall never forget her joy on receiving a telegram from Dym: 'Elected scholar of Jesus.' I feel sure she attributed that election to some heavenly preference. So when I came home with the news that I, too, was to go to Cambridge her enthusiasm took fire.

'Yes but, mother, it isn't like Girton or Newnham, it's quite a beginning place.'

'That's all the more fun. And anyhow it's a College, and you will be going up.'

Unfortunately the boys were away, at work or on holiday, during the summer of '85; so that mother and I had to fall back on our imagination of what Cambridge life was like. A brother's communications are usually scanty, and all that Dym had ever waxed eloquent about was the rowing. He had frequently referred to Jesus as 'head of the river', and on my being puzzled about this had carefully explained the nature of a 'bump'. He referred to his 'rooms', to his having been mixed up in a row and being nearly 'sent down'; he gave me a silk scarf of Jesus colours (black and red), and told me of his trouble in coming across an unpronounceable name in the Old Testament one day when he was reading lessons in Chapel. This chapel I imagined must be a building like the horrible little Wesleyan chapels disfiguring the villages in Cornwall. That was all mother and I could actually recall of Dym's talk about Cambridge, but we knew that he had gone there a diffident and rather morbid schoolboy, and had become almost at once an animated and charming young man.

It was a great comfort to me that the unknown was not to be faced alone. Two of my special friends at school were of the chosen few—Bessie Jones and her own *fidus Achates*, Bessie Davies. We three had tried to extract from Mrs. Bryant, during our last few days at school, some idea of what our actual work at Cambridge would be. She was almost as vague as we were; all that she was certain about was a subject hitherto unheard of by any of us, called psychology. Was there any book on it, we asked. Yes, a friend of hers, a Mr. Sully, had written a whole treatise on it, but it was rather expensive. Now the Sixth were allowed to choose their own prizes, so I went to the school secretary and asked if she would lump two or more of my prizes together and let me have ‘Sully’s Psychology’.

‘Wait a moment, dear, and I’ll see what the price of it is’, and so saying she pulled down her fat catalogue of titles and publishers. Idly looking on I observed her running her finger down the letter S, and muttering Sa—Se—Si. There was a closer perusal here, and it suddenly struck me that she was hunting not for the author but for the subject. Tactfully breaking to her that it began with a P and then went on to an *s* and a *y* and a *c* and an *h*, I saw that she was quite incredulous; so we both looked it up in laughter, and to her astonishment found it.

To such points as this mother gave no thought at the moment, for her energy was concentrated on the material side of my new adventure. I had been instructed to bring silver and bed-linen. Of both these mother had plenty, since all the old family stuff was on her hands—the remains of our palmy days when she had bought the finest linen she could find, and when there had been spoons and forks enough for a large family and visitors.

But my dress—that was the rub. I had no notion about it, having always put on whatever was assigned to me. Mother’s theory was that *one* dress for each main occasion was the acme of comfort, since there need be no worry as to which to put on. She even envied our vicar’s wife who wore but one style

always—a nun's costume. It was usual to have three dresses: one for very best, for parties or any stately affair; one for Sundays; and one for every day. These were known as 'hightum', 'tightum', and 'scrub'. Now obviously my historical school dress, my 'scrub', was not possible for Cambridge, and my Sunday one had got too small. Mary Worley had lately gone to Girton and we called on her for advice. She was as uninforming about Cambridge as she had been about school, but we managed to extract from her that colleges always had evening dinner and that one was expected to change for it.

This meant three new dresses at least—one for every day, one for dinner, and one for Sundays. By sheer good luck at this juncture my young aunt Fanny, well-to-do, of fashionable tastes, recently widowed, sent me three of her coloured dresses, hoping they might come in useful. They took ages to get into, with their close-fitting bodices, endless hooks and buttons, skirts to the ankle, and a kind of gathering-up behind called a crinolette. But they fitted all right when once on, and the pleasure of looking grown-up atoned for my diminished mobility. Before long I developed a technique for getting out of the everyday one; while each one of the little round buttons down the front had to be done *up*, they could all be released by a sudden jerk given to the bottom one.

A few days before I had to leave home, our old vicar paid a call to say good-bye to the house and family before its dissolution. As his spiritual duties were now over he allowed himself to be absolutely jovial, and I like to remember him in his new and human light. He was a Cambridge man himself, and though he could not think of anything useful about it to tell me, he assured me that it was the only place in the world, and at the same time gave me half a sovereign. 'I thought you might have to buy John Stuart Mill, or some such book,' said he. Mother expressed her surprise at his encouraging such a heretic, and they laughed together, and I am sure that he winked.

My trunk, bulging with everything mother could imagine I might possibly want, on the model of the white knight, was

hoisted on a cab, and I was dispatched to Liverpool Street Station in the care of our one servant. Mother waved to me as lightly as if I were only off for a week-end with Mary Wood. It was not till years later that I realized how dreadful that parting must have been to her. Not only had I never been separated from her before, but the boys had all gone, with no hope of reunion in that house where she had been through such extraordinary changes of fortune. She was left alone to face the sale of all her furniture and the accumulated treasures of fifteen years. And she was going to live with her strait-laced sister Lizzie in a dreary suburb of south London. Is it a provision of Nature that young people cannot sympathize with the grief of their parents, or else they would have no reserve of strength to meet their own troubles later?

## § 2

It was late afternoon when I reached Cambridge, and dusk as I drove through the streets to Crofton Cottages (the address given to me). After a long drive the cab pulled up outside a row of mean little houses all stuck together, such as one might see among the less cheerful outskirts of London, with 'Apartments' in the window. The cabby asked me which house it was, and while I was hesitating and about to tell him that there must be some mistake, a tiny door opened, disclosing a brightly lit narrow passage, and a staircase to the side, on which one could immediately step. Then a welcoming voice:

'Is this Miss Thomas? Come in, come in. We heard the cab and guessed it was you. The others have all arrived.'

This was the first time that I had been called Miss Thomas. My long dress didn't seem so absurd as before, and the new title gave me aplomb. My welcomer was Miss Rogers, a large and genial Newnhamite, considerably older than the rest of us. As soon as the idea of the college had been adumbrated she had entered her name as a student, and for some time had been the only one actually on the books. She had been known in Cambridge as 'Miss Hughes's lamb'—the point of the joke being that she was quite twice the size of Miss Hughes.

When my trunk was landed I was shown my room. This was some twelve feet square, on the ground-floor, with one small window flush with the pavement, a narrow bed, a scrap of carpet, a basket chair, one upright chair, and a bureau. A bright fire crackled in the hearth.

'Is this *mine?*' cried I in ecstasy. I had always had a bedroom of my own at home, but that had been almost entirely occupied by a big double-bed, a washing-stand, and a chest of drawers. But here was a real sitting-room (for the bed looked like a couch), such a one as Dym must have had, a room in College.

Around me there was soon a small crowd of the earlier comers, for of course every one was anxious to know how many students there were and what the other rooms were like. Miss Rogers, acting as M.C., introduced us all to one another before dinner, giving rapid information as to whence each had come, and hoping that we should like our rooms and get on happily together. She told me afterwards that some of them were painfully shy, and how thankful she was when I told her in confidence that I was the scourge of any society into which I was thrown. 'I needn't bother about Miss Thomas,' thought she, 'I can put her among the assets instead of the liabilities,' and she looked to me to help her make things go. There were twelve of us that first night, and two more were to follow in a few days. Half of us had to be out-students in neighbouring cottages since the College could only accommodate seven. It would amuse the present-day students in their fine buildings in Wollaston Road to see those meagre beginnings. Two tiny houses had been made to communicate by the removal of party walls. There was nothing at all between the door and the pavement. Stairs were so narrow that we had to squeeze to pass one another. Sanitary arrangements were of the most primitive, and a bathroom, of course, was unheard of.

But no student's room or suite of rooms in the best appointed university could possibly produce the pride that we felt in ours. The main charm was our power to shut the door, or even lock

it, and put up a notice 'engaged' on it. I had a notion to give my room a name, and the other students followed suit. I called mine 'The Growlery', after a room in *Bleak House*, intimating thereby that any one wanting to growl could come in and laugh it off. This proved, as time went on, no empty invitation, and I had many visitors for the purpose. One of our number was an aesthete, and hung up a portrait of George Eliot, whom she resembled. She dressed in dull green velvet and was a free-thinker. Another had had mysterious romantic experiences, of which she spoke at length in an allusive manner, and would play on her piano and sing at any odd moment. Another was a Russian aristocrat of charmingly gracious manners; she was so strict a vegetarian that she refused on principle to pass close to a butcher's shop, and had some difficulty in getting along Silver Street because there were two butchers nearly opposite one another, obliging her to take the middle of the road. We were a strangely odd team. The only one among us who was really normal and proper shone forth as original by her very commonplaceness.

The first morning that I awoke to my new surroundings I saw a policeman passing my window so close that I could have summoned his aid with a touch. At breakfast I tried to break the rather nervous strain by relating the incident and pointing out the convenience of having the Force literally ready to hand. Miss Hughes overheard, and suggested that perhaps it would be advisable for me to get some curtains. This meant a visit to the town, and it soon turned out that everybody had something to buy—cups and saucers, cocoa, biscuits, condensed milk, note-books. Miss Rogers then offered to show us the way, and as soon as morning work was over we all straggled off. Straggling in twos and threes was necessary, because to go in a larger body was against the code. We were warned also by this unwritten code not to greet a fellow student in the street, and not to take a short cut through the same college more than once a day.

We were eager learners from Miss Rogers of these bits of etiquette, and of the usual pitfalls to be avoided. We learnt



which was the freshman's church and which the freshman's college. We knew how many balls there were on Clare bridge, and why it was bent in the middle. Those first glimpses of the town were unforgettable. The curious little streets and passages reminded me of those walks through the hinterland of the City that my father used to take us children on a Sunday. But the University had a peculiar flavour of its own, and I was intoxicated by the cobbled courts of the colleges, the smooth lawns, the bridges, and the stately avenues. In those days there was no such thing as an excursion to 'see' a university town, and it never once occurred to either Dym or me to ask mother to come to see it; and how she would have gone crazy over so many sketchable bits!

The shops, too, were unlike any I had seen, even in London. Bookshops especially were wickedly tempting, and the crockery shops almost as bad. But curtains were the subject of my story, and resolutely I turned my face from anything else. I must buy them in Petty Cury; the name drew me like a magnet; here I found some cheap 'art' muslin of the brightest rose colour. 'That', said the young man who served me, 'will make your room always look as if the sun were shining.'

And he was right. With the new curtains the Growlery always had a gay aspect, even in the dreariest weather. This was as well, for otherwise the room looked very bare. While the others had been buying little ornaments and framed views of the colleges, my limited pocket-money kept me to the barest necessities. So I made a bold move by adopting the role of a hermit, and telling every one that I preferred my room to be severely plain, that this indeed was the latest fashion among people who really counted. Pictures, I maintained, distracted thought, and ornament merely for the sake of ornament was *démodé*. On a piece of cardboard I illuminated the words, 'Thou shalt think', and hung it over my mantelpiece. That would set the tone and prevent any tiresome remarks.

After the atmosphere of school the most striking feature of this new existence was its freedom. We were hampered by no restrictions, and it was assumed that we had come to work.

No one took any notice as to who was present at prayers before breakfast every morning, when Miss Hughes read a short passage from the Bible and a collect. Work usually began with a lecture from which no one was ever absent. We were advised not to work in the afternoon until 3 o'clock, and not to sit up late at night. Country walks were encouraged, as there was no chance for any other regular exercise.

The 'staff' consisted of three: Miss Hughes, a lady house-keeper, and a maid of all work. Obviously Miss Hughes had her time cut out. Not being at all satisfied with the kind of training of teachers hitherto in vogue, she had to create the whole curriculum along new lines. Nearly all the tuition was provided by herself. And she had to live in extremely close quarters with fourteen girls, one or two of whom were temperamental, not to use a stronger term. She told us later on that when the task was first proposed to her she refused it flatly, but that Miss Buss had pointed out to her that it was a grand opportunity, that she was cut out for it, that there was no one else to do it, and that she simply must. We North Londoners were well able to picture that scene. To this day I am amazed at her pluck. Psychology and logic had been her special subjects at Newnham, and these gave her no trouble, but she had to give us lectures on the history of education, hygiene, speech production, methods of teaching, and theories of discipline and school management in general, in all of which she was merely feeling her way.

Our 'lecture room' was a source of much entertainment to the Cambridge people who came to visit the new 'Training College'. In the top room of one of the cottages was placed a trestle-table covered with American cloth. Around this the fourteen of us managed to squeeze, leaving just room for the lecturer at one end, and a blackboard behind. There were no means of heating the room, and Miss Rogers used to sit with her feet in a muff. The difficulty of speech-training in so small a space was overcome by making the students go the length of the passage (not far) and declaim a piece of poetry through the closed door. I never hear the words 'The quality of mercy

is not strained' without recalling the scene when our Russian student made them penetrate, in absurdly foreign accents, to the rest of us, doubled with laughter, inside the room.

Miss Hughes's style of lecturing was entirely her own. Although she gave us some definite principles and theories that were fairly well established, the greater part of the time was spent in practically working out some problem, in simple psychological experiments, in discussion, or in probing our own mental experiences. For instance, we had agreed one morning that one could always distinguish interior from exterior sensations, when the Russian student told us that on her first awaking in England she was distressed by a strange happening inside her, only to find later that it was the breakfast gong. I doubt whether any modern training college, endowed with every advantage of reference books and special lecturers, can offer its students anything better than we enjoyed in that little upper room. Whatever we did was real. Not one of us was allowed to take refuge in mere words, for every point one tried to make was pursued and considered or exposed as rubbish. Yet no one was ever snubbed. The supreme value to us was the contact with a lively mind—a lasting good in itself; so that in spite of the great advances in the study of psychology, we have had little to unlearn.

The only thing I regret is the cruel waste of time and energy in reading and trying to understand our one text-book (the aforesaid prize). I suppose Miss Hughes hardly liked to disparage the book, but it was enough to put any one off the study of psychology for good and all. One anecdote is all that remains to me of that heavy tome; and that only because it illustrated neatly an important point of mental workings: 'What do you do in a storm?' a passenger asked an old sailor. 'I couldn't rightly say, Sir, but when the storm comes on I does it quite natural.'

We were handicapped by having nothing remotely resembling a library—only a few books lent from one to another. Or was it a handicap? Books of reference are invaluable, but such a lot of earnest rubbish has been written on education

that I think we were the gainers by not having so many bewildering treatises around us. One of our founts of wisdom was a book by Fitch, which seemed to cover every possible want, but much of it seemed silly to us even then, and we were in the spirit to get as much fun as possible. A book on 'Class Management' (which was apparently a special branch of educational science) gave a great many hints, one of which made me dubious about the rest: 'Avoid unconscious humour.' How could one avoid what one wasn't conscious of? And surely unconscious humour was better than none? Another hint sounded splendid at first, and fired us with enthusiasm, but led to absurdities in practice: 'Never tell a class what you can get them to tell you.' Everything however trivial should be 'elicited', apparently. Thus Miss Rogers, in describing the people in Aix before the good news arrived, wanted to impress the idea that they were getting anxious. 'What do people get when they are expecting something?' she asked. A hand waved. 'Please Miss, a telegram.'

There was no need for Miss Hughes to point out the folly of such 'hints on teaching'. Miss Rogers was never exempt from covert allusions to 'telegrams' and the joke did the work effectively. The few worth-while books at our disposal we were shown how to read sensibly, and how to make abstracts of them. To me this was quite a new pursuit and had a fascination of its own. One day Miss Hughes chanced on me as I sat at my bureau busily making an abstract on some footling book I had found on 'Education in the Home'. Glancing over my shoulder she said: 'Remember what Bacon says about books—some to be tasted, some to be swallowed, only a *few* to be chewed and digested.' The quotation sounds a commonplace now, but coming pat at the moment it was wanted it made a lasting impression on me. I saw at once that the book I was 'abstracting' was not even worth tasting, and the burden of my childish conscientiousness of never skipping fell from me like Christian's bundle. In fact Miss Hughes had the fine teaching knack of making her students aware of what they 'needn't bother about'. Like the Yorkshireman's direction to

a stranger: 'Follow t' road till tha coomst to a cloomp o' trees. Now, tak *no notice* o' t' cloomp, but . . . etc.'

As a make-weight to our free and easy discussions round the table, we were taken to the Divinity Schools to hear *real* lectures. For these we had tickets, sat with real undergraduates in their gowns, and provided ourselves with special new note-books. The course on psychology from James Ward might as well have been delivered in Hindustani for anything I understood of it, for it was on the lines of his article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. We all took notes as fast as possible, trusting that the future life would make them intelligible, but not one of us faced them again. Bass Mullinger gave a course on the history of education, quite intelligible, thorough, and dull; sufficient to make us feel that we never wanted to hear any more about Great Educationists. Perhaps Miss Hughes had an inkling of the relief we felt in returning to our home lectures after these efforts. Mrs. Bryant came from London to give us a course on Ethics. We understood her better, or thought we did, and wrote long papers for her. What pages of rubbish I must have written on moral questions. I used to sprinkle capital letters to give point and dignity to my remarks, causing ribaldry among the others by speaking of the Infinitely Postponed, in a passage that was read aloud by Mrs. Bryant with grave approval.

One of these odd courses in the town was on the Hebrew Prophets, by Dr. Westcott. He looked like one of those old prophets himself, his face all radiant as he rolled out passages from Isaiah, and I wrote full accounts of him to mother. When she happened to see Dym she said:

'Molly writes to me a lot about a man called Westcott lecturing to undergraduates at Cambridge. Did you know anything of him when you were there?'

'Did I know the old bloke!' was my brother's succinct reply.

To all these lectures in town we made our way in parties of two and three, and once a rearguard detachment heard a man say to his companion: 'There goes that wonderful Miss

Hughes.' She was a well-known figure in Cambridge, not only on account of her academic honours, but still more for her social charm. She could persuade anybody to do anything, and sometimes she would induce a real live don to come and give us a short course of lectures in our own college. I think these big people from their ancient and stately colleges must have been vastly amused by our little attic and the eager group round the table, ever ready to fire awkward questions at them in sheer simplicity. One of these visitors was big physically as well as mentally, so tall that he had some difficulty in getting into the room and ranging himself into position for his lecture. This was William Cunningham of Trinity. Miss Hughes had begged him to take any subject he liked, for as she pointed out to him the best preparation for teaching was to have *something* sensible in one's head. So he chose his special subject, a kind of historical political economy. It was impossible to be solemn in our tiny room, so he let himself go in a simple and merry way, inventing ludicrous illustrations of important points, and then joining in our ever-ready laughter, obviously enjoying himself. At the close of his course he went the length of asking Miss Hughes to bring a few of us to tea with him one afternoon. I happened to be one of the three she selected, and shall never forget my first experience of a don's tea-party. Far too ignorant of the kind of thing to be nervous, I determined to make the most of such an opportunity. I was too much impressed by the combination of comfort and odour of learning in the beautiful great room to notice what the actual tea was like, but when the great man came to sit by me for a few moments in his Orbit of Grace round the many guests, I seized my chance. In response to his smiling inquiry as to what interested me most in Cambridge, I replied:

'Oh, all the great thinkers everywhere; and now that I have you to myself for a moment I want to ask you what you think really happened at the Resurrection.'

The poor man might have been suddenly apprehended for murder, so taken aback was he. Perceiving that I had committed a social indiscretion I gave a nervous laugh. Then we

both laughed a little awkwardly, and muttering something about a 'large question' he passed on to the next guest.

In Miss Hughes's eyes any one who was an expert in anything could help her students to be more efficient teachers. One day we had a talk from an actress, a Miss Shaw, who was taking the part of the Princess Ida. She showed us how to stand in front of a class with ease and grace, so as to make ourselves more impressive, and how to make effective pauses between the main parts of a lesson, and how always to 'set the important in silence'. 'If you want to make anything emphatic,' she said, 'you must do as a good actor does—*change* your voice. No need to raise your voice, it's often far more striking to lower it, but change is essential.'

### § 3

A far more arduous business for Miss Hughes than lecturing on strange subjects, or finding generous lecturers, was getting schools for us to practise in. Such as were available were situated in remote streets the other side of Cambridge, and one lesson a week for each of us was the most that she could get. For us it was enough. In order to get the utmost benefit from such scant experience, it was customary during our first week or two for Miss Hughes and *all* of us to attend every lesson. In the halcyon week before any of these lessons were started we were rather light-hearted about them. Give a lesson! Pooh! Any one can do that. But it seemed that we were expected to write *notes* of what we were going to say—an unforeseen nuisance. It was quite a new and rather shocking idea that a teacher needed to prepare a lesson; we thought that lessons just flowed forth.

The first ordeal was at hand, and an afternoon was fixed for two lessons to be given in an elementary school right across the town. Miss Rogers and I were selected, she because of her age, and I, no doubt, for my insouciance. She was to begin with an object lesson and I to follow with a grammar lesson, and we prepared and gave in to Miss Hughes elaborate notes.

When we reached the school we found about twenty young children in a block of desks, and in a similar block at the side we students were invited to be seated, while the Head and Miss Hughes sat on chairs to command the view. Miss Rogers stood forth and began. She produced a large piece of rock-salt, and held forth on its properties. She had become very hot with the walk, and still hotter with nervousness. I can see her now, perspiration streaming from her, as she talked ever faster and faster about this lump of stuff. Nothing coherent reached my mind, for I was sick with dread at the thought of my own ordeal to come.

The subject allotted to me had been the *Noun*—easy enough it seemed. I was actually able to remember my own first lesson on it, when my mother had shown me the list of the Parts of Speech, and then introduced me to the Noun as the name of all the things to be seen in the room or indeed anywhere. ‘Everything?’ I had asked: ‘Well then what is the use of all those other words in the list?’ ‘That, dear, you will find as we go along’, had been her reply. In making my notes I had foolishly thought to improve on this wise approach, and settle the meaning of a noun once for all. But I hadn’t reckoned on the immense space of time that half an hour can be when you are faced by a mass of indistinguishable humanity, when you are incapable of asking a question, and are afraid to stop talking. So utterly gravelled was I to think of anything else to say about the noun that I plunged into philosophical remarks about the nature of ‘things’. I heard myself saying, ‘a thing is anything you can *think* about; that gas-bracket is a thing; you yourselves are all things’. At this I was horribly aware that the students were smiling. But unfortunately the children had evidently been told to behave, and no relief came from them; they merely stared at me, no doubt regarding the whole affair as a kind of gala performance. And like some dramatic background I was aware of the students busily taking notes.

We reached home, and after a merciful tea we packed into our attic for a ‘criticism’. Remarks quite just and sensible were volunteered, but with the leniency one would expect from a



condemned man for a fellow criminal. Many good points and a few weak ones had been observed in Miss Rogers, but when she had been 'done' Miss Hughes said: 'I'm afraid we must regard the lesson given by Miss Thomas as a failure.' The Headmistress had considered that I had a pleasant manner, but that was the only bright spot; the students' criticisms were given reluctantly, but all the more deadly on that account. I needed my Growlery, and retired to lick my sores there. After a bit there was a tap on the door, and who should appear but Miss Hughes.

'I was pleased,' was her amazing remark, 'that you made such a mess of your lesson.' Then to my dumb astonishment she added: 'I have noticed that people who are going to do really well—in almost any walk in life—nearly always start with a failure. I could tell from your notes that the lesson would be a bad one.'

'Then why didn't you . . . ?' I faltered.

'Why didn't I tell you to alter them? Well, you were beginning with a definition, instead of leading up to it. You could easily have recast your notes; but don't you see that then the lesson would have been mine, not yours? Success so gained would have been very bad for you. As it is you have learnt for ever not to begin with a definition. And a lot of other things, too', she added smiling. 'No, I mustn't sit down; no end of things to do—but I can tell you this, you will make an excellent teacher.'

The Growlery had justified its name.

It was a little later in the term that the room did its duty again. We were all of us ready to see the humorous side of everything. All except Miss Hay, the one student whose seriousness and matter-of-factness amounted to a joke in itself. She was neither foolish herself, nor did she see any folly in others, and gained the nickname of 'La Haye Sainte'. One day she burst into the Growlery, without even stopping to knock, collapsed to the floor and exclaimed in tones of real heart-break, 'I am ruined'.

\* 'Come, come,' said I, 'Go to! How now Reynaldo!' But

seeing that these encouraging noises had no effect, I hoped for something really exciting, and said, 'Tell me ALL'.

With great reluctance a girls' private school had granted us the privilege of giving a few advanced lessons to the eldest class, and Miss Hughes was to be the only critic present. Hygiene was the subject suggested, and several lessons had gone smoothly enough when it fell to Miss Hay to give one on systems of drainage. She had written elaborate notes and was confident, and was solemnly getting on with her lecture, when suddenly, while in full cry about some U-shaped trap, her ignorance of the subject and her daring to instruct people about it, struck her as ridiculous, and she began to laugh. It was the first joke she had ever really felt. In vain she sought for some excuse for her lapse from propriety, but drains don't lend themselves to amusing situations, and the more she tried to stop laughing the more incoherent with it she became. Miss Hughes rose and thrust a piece of paper into her hands, 'Oh, Miss Hay, I have just remembered a most important message; will you take this at once to this address. I will carry on with your lesson for you, and tell the girls the funny story that I know you had in mind.'

The address was of course only that of the college, and poor Miss Hay had rushed home expecting instant dismissal, and flung herself into the Growlery. What was her surprise to find that it was not only I that laughed at her tragedy, but all the others too, even Miss Hughes herself, who told us that the girls had been quite unsuspecting of anything wrong. That incident was the making of Miss Hay, who was never thereafter the dull piece of conventionality she had once been.

In most schools we came to be welcomed, and in one case we were actually asked for. An urgent message came one day from the elementary school in Eden Street; two of the teachers were ill, and could Miss Hughes spare two of her students to take their place for an hour or two every morning for the next few days? Immediately two of us were picked out—Bessie Jones as being tall and imposing, and I as being game for any adventure. As soon as breakfast was over off we started in

high spirits, not knowing in the least what would be expected of us, but glorying in the fact that the shortage of teachers would mean that there would be no one to supervise or criticize us. It was a lovely autumn morning and we were exhilarated by our walk and our new sense of responsibility. Surely no two teachers ever entered an elementary school more gaily.

We were heartily welcomed by the Headmistress, who showed us into a big room, with two large classes, side by side, and asked us to arrange the work as we liked between us. A cupboard with various piles of books for reading and arithmetic was at our disposal, and a time-table hung on the wall. But we were told that there was no need to stick to the time-table if we wished to do anything else. Then Bessie and I had a hurried consultation, agreeing to keep to the subjects on the time-table, but to treat them as freely as we felt inclined. We also arranged to begin at once, and change over the classes at the interval.

Our great asset was our having to ask the children what they had been doing last, which put us at once on a personal footing. The arithmetic was not beyond me, and I won their hearts by confessing what difficulty I had had in mastering the rule they were doing, and showing them a little dodge I had invented for doing it quickly. After this a reading lesson was plain sailing, and I dared to ask questions, getting a forest of eager hands thrust up in response, with the incessant sound of 'teesh' to implore my ear. I glanced across the room to smile at Bessie, who was having a like experience. At the interval she and I considered that we might launch out more freely for the ensuing lessons. So I boldly asked my class what they liked best. 'Please Miss a story.' Thereupon I plunged into the Greek legends, and kept these going throughout our stay, discreetly wedging them in between bits of dictation and arithmetic. Bessie had found that reciting poetry to them had been equally entrancing, and for one joyful period she took the whole two classes together for a singing lesson. To this day Bessie and I look back to those hours of scratch lessons as a red-letter spot.

In order to increase our limited chances of practice in teaching we were given the task of lecturing to one another. One evening a week a student had to stand up in our attic and deliver a lecture of an hour's length, without a single note, to Miss Hughes and the rest. My subject was the eleven years tyranny under Charles I, and I spent so much trouble over it that I know quite a lot about it even now. The audience was more critical than any other I have experienced, but what a tonic the criticism was! Miss Hughes maintained that severe criticism was the highest compliment that could be paid to any one. 'The more carefully you prepare your work,' she would say, 'the more I can pull you to pieces, because you give me something to go upon.' And the value of simple clearness of style she brought home to us by relating what had been said of Henry Sidgwick: 'He has not only got to the bottom of his subject, but he has come up again.'

## VII

### *The Furies Amuse Themselves*

#### § 1

THE worst blight on the teaching profession is the woman who can think and talk nothing but shop. Men are not so bad. But on the Continent there are to be met women by the score whose sole purpose in visiting Bruges or Venice appears to be to find material for lessons to the Upper Fourth. The disease was not so rife in the eighties, but the narrowness of outlook was a danger just the same, and Miss Hughes continually pressed upon us the prime necessity for a teacher to have some bigger interest in her life than merely passing on (however ably) her own acquisitions to her pupils. 'Nothing inspires children more,' she would say, 'than to be aware that their teacher is engrossed in some big subject that is beyond them; and nothing produces contempt more surely than the notion that her main interest lies in their little successes and failures.'

It was in accordance with this principle that so many visitors were invited to the college at meal-times, to mix with us in an informal way, as well as to give us a talk on their own besetting subject, with no ulterior motive of its 'coming in useful'.

All our meal-times, whether enriched by visitors or not, were entirely free from 'shop' and were occasions for general conversation and jollity. I can remember nothing of the food we had except the marmalade and the butter, around which there were legends. We were told that marmalade was called 'squish' and that every undergraduate was expected to eat his weight in it during his time at Cambridge. One of Dym's rare bits of information to me had been that butter was sold by the yard; but this I had put down to a mere leg-pull. What was my astonishment, therefore, to find it literally true, and to see on the first breakfast table little four-inch rolls about one inch

in diameter. Unfortunately the butter was not very good, and we ate rather sparingly of it. Except one student (Irish, needless to say), who disliked it so much that she ate great chunks of it in order to get rid of it! We pointed out to her that if it disappeared like that our housekeeper would think we were quite pleased with it and would buy still more. 'I can't help it,' said she, 'I can't bear the sight of it.'

Newnham and Girton were naturally very hospitable to us, owing to Miss Hughes's acquaintances in the one, and old North Londoners in the other. My first visit to each was memorable. At Newnham Miss Clough was Principal, and as she had been one of the chief promoters of our little college she looked upon us as god-children, and invited us all to tea with her on our first Sunday. I took in little of the glories of Newnham, being entirely absorbed in admiration of its gracious Head. I was in that green condition when one fancies that a poet must be dead, even if he ever trod the earth at all; and here, handing tea to me and humanly smiling was actually the sister of a poet whom mother had so often quoted to me. 'To veer how vain, on, onward strain', and 'But Westward, look, the land is bright' were running in my head all the time, and I was impatient to get home to write to mother about my visit.

My first voyage to Girton was more alarming, because I went alone and had a long walk to get nervous in. And the big buildings overawed me. But dash it all, I thought, it is only Mary Worley I am going to tea with, and I have done that at home heaps of times. Of course she was just the same dear old Mary Worley in her room at Girton as she had been in Canonbury. 'I have invited the jolliest of my friends to meet you,' said she, introducing a Miss Ramsay. Jolly was the word for her, and I had not a rag of nervousness left. Fortunately for our gaiety I had no idea of the ultra-distinguished classic she was to become—the only one in the first class in the Tripos. Faithful readers of *Punch* will recall the picture of her entering a railway carriage labelled 'First Class: for Ladies Only'.

In order to cure us of nervous 'tongue-tie', every Thursday

after dinner two of us were selected to take coffee in Miss Hughes's private room, to meet one or more of her men friends. I was never put through this ordeal, and conclude that it was because tongue-tie was not among my failings, on the contrary I was always one of the few who were besought (before a lecture from a stranger) to think up one or more intelligent questions when discussion was invited; in short, to use Miss Hughes's own expression, to make fools of ourselves for the public good.

However, it was the apparently strait-laced Miss Buss who took the boldest step in giving us a chance to meet men in a social way. She gave a real ball. The guests in the main were her own old pupils at Newnham and Girton, and their brothers and friends who were 'up'. A hall in the town was hired with, of course, a dance-band, and *all* of us were invited. Alarm was our first reaction, for the question of what we could wear was a pressing one with most of us. But Miss Hughes assured us that our dinner-frocks would do quite well. Bessie Jones firmly refused to go. Her dress, by the wildest flight of imagination, could not be called an 'evening' one; but her ostensible reason for refusal was her objection to dancing; she was a nonconformist and had been brought up to regard it as sinful. But after Miss Hughes had made some convincing references to David's behaviour before the Ark, and a fellow student had shown how her dress could be transmogrified, she was ready to join the rest of us as we got into the four-wheelers. A dark rumour had been spread among us that it took four girls to extract a single word from an undergraduate. But as for myself I had had so much experience with my brothers and their friends that I had no fear of any young men, and hoped that by continual smiling and talking I should be able to distract their attention from my inadequate evening dress.

This was the first dance with grown-up and entirely strange young men that I had ever been to, and I found it most exhilarating. My knowledge of the right steps was confined to a polka and a schottische, for although we had had plenty of dancing at home I had usually been requisitioned to play the piano for

Davies, who had amused herself by counting the Eumenides, and found that they were fourteen—the same number as ourselves; and as they seemed to rush about to business or pleasure in the same sort of wild way that we did, we adopted the name, and ever afterwards referred to our little band as ‘The Furies’.

It is greatly to Miss Hughes’s credit that she took us for an expedition on the river. We could guess from the expression on her face while we were in the boats that her anxiety was extreme; and she admitted afterwards that she would never have so embarked, had not her determination always been never to allow her nervousness to prevent her doing what was worth while. We were asked which of us could row, and I immediately volunteered. I had never done any rowing, but it looked so easy; I had watched men on the river, and all they did was to put in the oar leaning forwards, lean backwards and pull it out. If Miss Hughes had known what mother used to say of me, ‘She would offer to command the Channel Fleet if required’, her nervousness would have increased. ‘Crabs!’ she cried soon after we had started, ‘why, it’s lobsters you’re catching!’ Fortunately a few of us did know how to row, but even so, how those two boatloads returned in safety is a standing marvel to me.

Our everyday relaxations were really more enjoyable than those carefully planned for us. In all kinds of weather we would be out between lunch and tea. In groups of two or three we would explore the colleges and the Backs. I gained a certain respect from having had a brother at Jesus, and showed the others its grounds and chapel as if they belonged to me. We looked with awe at any Dons walking about, and once a man was pointed out to us as ‘the only one who is able to imagine a fourth dimension’. I thought to myself, How do they know he can imagine it? They’ve only his word for it; I might just as well say that *I* could. We looked with curiosity at Oscar Browning, for we knew the famous quatrain beginning, ‘O.B. oh be obedient. . .’

More attractive even than the Backs and the bridges were the real country walks—either one that took an hour, or a



longer round that took more than two hours—called respectively the Little Grind and the Big Grind. From these we would come back hot and healthy, laden with branches of autumn berries and leaves to decorate our rooms. One afternoon, when the weather had grown colder, Miss Rogers suggested an expedition to climb the Gog Magogs, and six or seven of us fell in with the idea. She appointed a meeting-place on the other side of the town, and there we all met after percolating through the streets in driblets. I had heard a good deal about mountain climbing, and was looking forward to some tough work. Leaving the town we agreed to walk in a comfortable bunch together, and so make a merry party of it. To beguile the way one of us suggested a new kind of game. Each in turn selected a fellow student, and told her quite plainly her besetting fault. It grew exciting, for many an unsuspected foible was brought to light. If there had been such a word then, we should have called our game ‘psycho-analysis’. There was much fun over little tricks and mannerisms, but after a bit I sensed that some of us were feeling a little sore, so I hailed Miss Rogers—‘Where are these Gog Magogs that we hear so much about?’ ‘Why, we’ve been over them some time ago,’ was the reply, ‘and are now well on our way home. Didn’t you know that to see the view in Cambridge you need only get up on a chair?’ I never look at those poor little hills now without recalling my disgust at their size, and the fault of character that was usefully brought home to me that afternoon.

Miss Hughes never came with us on any of these rambles, but she managed during our first term to take each one of us for a long walk alone with her, on some pretext or other, in order that she might get to know us intimately. We gathered this to be her motive, for she slipped out one day that there was no revealer of character like a long walk.

## § 2

Our indoor recreations were for the most part confined to the period between ten o’clock and bed-time, when we paid

visits to one another for a good-night chat. Quite untrammelled by having read any philosophical works, we brought fresh minds to the deepest problems, and found no trouble in deciding the origin of Evil and little points like that. We had a shock of delight on discovering that there is no such thing as Time: the Past was gone, the Future hadn't come, and the Present appeared to be no more than a kind of decimal point. Then some one started a theory that every object had a soul of its own. It commended itself to me except in respect of my clothes-brush, which was soulless in its way of hiding when wanted, or to use mother's favourite expression from St. Paul, it had 'no bowels'. But Miss Rogers thought otherwise. 'You see,' she said, 'the brush has a soul all right; it only follows the law of the total depravity of all inanimate objects.' Miss Rogers was always ready with a pat saying that dissolved our arguments. The value of introspection was once on the tapis when she broke in with, 'Surely you know how to conjugate the verb "to be resolute?"' It goes like this: "I am firm, thou art obstinate, he is pig-headed".'

Of course, politics and religion were discussed as freely as anything else, but I can't remember that we ever grew acrimonious about them. As we none of us knew the exact religious denomination or political party of the others, no one had a 'label' and we were thus free to adopt any opinion we liked, comfortably far from what our people at home would think. Probably most of us had been brought up to regard Gladstone as the prop of civilization, and as immortal an institution as Queen Victoria. However, Mr. Wood had given me a glance of the other side of the picture, and the M.O.G. initials had lately been supplanting the G.O.M. in many minds. One morning the first lecture was excused in order that we might all crowd into Miss Rogers's room to hear her read aloud his now historical Home Rule speech. Bessie Davies was the only one to get really worked up about it. She took this kind of thing more to heart than the rest of us; on St. David's Day she appeared with an enormous leek fastened to the front of her dress, and although she pretended

it was a kind of joke, I think she might have been as touchy as Fluellen if we had tried any funny remarks.

Fortunately we never took ourselves too seriously, for everything we undertook or talked about seemed to be shot with humour, and even the stern admirer of George Eliot would occasionally unbend into a hollow kind of laugh, although we were never sure at exactly what she was laughing, and suspected that sometimes it was at the emptiness of life as a whole.

Every Saturday night we made a point of going entirely silly. It was customary for one of us to give a 'cocoa' in her room to all the rest. At ten o'clock each guest arrived with cup and saucer, spoon, cushion to sit on, a bit of sewing, and some kind of contribution to the entertainment—a song, story, puzzle, or what-not. When the student with a piano was the host we had songs from Gilbert and Sullivan and some good old sentimental ballads. Bessie Jones was our only good pianist, but she could only play if she had the music to read. Incredible as it seems now, she had been brought up to think it morally wrong to play from memory. On what scheme of ethics can this have been based? What we all enjoyed most were cumulative rounds, and recitations from Edward Lear, Bret Harte, *The Hunting of the Snark*, and the Breitman Ballads. Readings from *Uncle Remus* and *Rudder Grange* were in constant demand. It was this last book that Miss Hughes introduced to us, and she could hardly read it for the laughter of herself and all of us. She entered with gusto into all our fun, and seemed to have a bottomless store of anecdotes, either true or *ben trovato*, from her own life or her desultory reading.

There was one item in these meetings that gave me no pleasure, and that was the bit of mending that it was considered respectable to bring. Not from any lack of mending to be done; my skirt got torn by brambles, frayed round the bottom and needing new braid, and often loose from its gathers; and holes in stockings were always with me. Mother had provided me with needles and cotton and 'mending', but she couldn't supply the constant service with which she had always spoilt

me. I could do anything with a needle except sew with it, my bits of mending accumulated, and I soon learnt at least one piece of psychology, that you forget to do what you don't want to do. So I conceived the plan of arriving at the cocoa with my mending, spreading it out ostentatiously, and beginning to do it more clumsily than I need have done. No expert can endure to watch work being bungled. As I foresaw, my neighbour offered to do it for me. I protested properly, but was eventually persuaded to hand it over to her. After a week or two this device of mine became matter of comment, but as it struck every one as a joke it got caught up into the general fun, and I believe the two Bessies would have been disappointed if there had been no response to their cheery greeting, 'Well, Molly, what have you got to-night that wants mending?' They little knew how great was their boon, for I kept to myself how I had once in a desperate hurry been driven to my childhood's trick of painting with indigo the bit of my leg that was showing through a hole.

One of those Saturdays I specially asked to be the host, without stating the reason. It was my nineteenth birthday, and Tony had promised to send me a big tin of cream and a batch of saffron buns. These made a grand addition to the customary fare of biscuits. Mother had sent me a new dressing-gown of bright blue, and as it was usual to wear dressing-gowns at these parties, the gift was more than welcome. I had never owned such a garment before, and had hitherto appeared in my day dress. Perhaps it was my new gown, or my high spirits, or the cream . . . but they soon guessed that it was a special occasion, and did their best to make the party go off well. I can still remember some of the contributions. Miss Rogers led off with 'The Heathen Chinee', reaching the crisis with a preternatural solemnity.

'I looked at Nye, and Nye looked at me.'

Bessie Davies gave us 'Barbara Fritchie' in mock elocution style, making her teeth disappear as she imitated the old woman's 'Shoot if you must this old grey head'. Miss Mears read us Uncle Remus's story of the Deluge, which even then

we felt to be a masterpiece. By this time all had been well plied with cocoa and Cornish fare, mending was brought out, and we looked hopefully to Miss Hughes.

'I expect you want a story,' she said. 'Well, I have an old one that may amuse you: Long ago, in the days of King Solomon, there was a little robin—a specially happy little fellow because his wife thought all the world of him. When accounts reached him of Solomon's wonderful new Temple "Pooh!" said he, "I have but to place my claw on the top of it for a moment and the whole affair will collapse." His wife told the neighbours with great pride what her husband could do. By degrees the little robin's boast reached the ears of Solomon himself. "Send him to me," said the King. "My dear," said the robin to his wife, "King Solomon has summoned me to his presence." "Oh, I hope he has not heard of what you have been saying." "I have no doubt that he has, and desires a conference with me on the subject." When he reached the royal presence—"What do you mean," King Solomon asked, "by saying that you could destroy my Temple?" Rather alarmed, the little robin thought it best to make a clean breast: "To tell you the truth, Sire, I only said it to impress the wife." "Oh, I see," laughed the King. "Enough! Wives need that kind of thing, I know. But your kind of talk goes too far. Don't do it again, you understand." On the robin's return his wife was anxiously waiting for the news. "What did the King say to you?" "He begged me not to do it, dear."'

After this the demand was insistent for another story, and looks were turned on me for an account of one of the wild tricks of my brothers when we were children at home.

'I've got quite a different story to-night,' said I, 'one that I came across somewhere—in some magazine, I suppose. The accuracy of the story was not vouched for, but I think you will say that it has truth stamped upon it.' Amid incredulous smiles I began:

'Many years ago two Englishmen, Brown and Robinson, were engaged in a tiger-hunting expedition in India. Shortly after their arrival Brown went out for a sun-down stroll by

himself. It was a beautiful evening and beautiful scenery, and he was tempted to stray afar, and was attracted by a narrow terrace-path winding along between the hill-side above and a precipice below, and each turn of it gave him a fresh view of delight. A greater surprise was in store for him. Rounding the next bend, some ten yards ahead, swinging along, was a huge tigress. With the wit that flies to our brain in tight places, he squeezed himself as flat as possible against the hill-side and kept as doggo as his agitation would let him, holding his breath. With awful slowness the beast swung along towards him, apparently enjoying the evening air as he had been doing. She drew alongside, yes, she was actually passing him. But the tension and the sudden relief were too much, and his nerve gave way. Giving her haunch a mighty smack he exclaimed "Gee up, old lady!"

Next thing he knew he was hanging over the precipice supported by the tigress, who had her teeth in his clothes. She was pulling him up on to the path. He knew that his only hope now was to sham dead, and he lay on the path as limp as possible while she began to sniff him all over. Now he always carried snuff in his pocket, and some of it had been shaken out over his waistcoat in his fall. Presently the tigress gave an almighty sneeze, and bounded off in haste. "A lesson to you, my boy, not to venture out so far without your gun," was Robinson's comment on the story. A week or two later the two friends were walking together when Brown pointed to the very turn of the path where it happened. "And look, here's a fair find," said Robinson, aiming his gun at a tigress stretched out on a rock below, with her cubs by her. "Stop!" cried Brown, pulling his arm down, "Don't shoot her. That's my tigress. She saved my life."

This story tickled Miss Hughes greatly, and frequently she would hail me at any odd time as I was starting off somewhere with 'Gee up, old lady!'

Sundays were always pleasant for us. With the plethora of places of worship in Cambridge we could sample any kind we liked, and no one remarked on what we did. Before we

left school Miss Buss had summoned us few North Londoners for a serious talk and advice. She told us that Cambridge was a hotbed of infidelity, and that we must not be tempted away from our faith, but nail our colours to the mast. This led me to suppose that any college chapel was of the hotbed kind and must be avoided. As I had recently fallen under the spell of E. A. Stewart of Holloway and his too emotional eloquence, I determined to attend the church in Cambridge that he recommended to me. Off I marched by myself to this very low church (I forget its name) near the junction of Petty Cury with Sidney Street, supported through its quite exceptional dullness by the consciousness that I was doing a lot of nailing to the mast. On the third Sunday I suppose I looked a little disgruntled at lunch, for Miss Rogers came to me afterwards with :

‘You might come with me to King’s this afternoon; I should be so grateful for your company; you can go out if you don’t like it.’

I respected Miss Rogers and felt sure that she wouldn’t go anywhere that was too much of a hotbed. So I agreed. She made no reference to the chapel on the way, but talked of this and that. Never shall I forget my shock of delight as we stepped in. The afternoon sun was streaming through the warm colours of the west window. Then we went farther in, all among the deep cool blues of the windows beyond the screen. When we sat down my eye caught sight of the vaulted roof. In spite of my long acquaintance with St. Paul’s Cathedral and occasional visits to Westminster Abbey, I felt that I had never seen anything so lovely. And the anthem finished me; not even St. Paul’s choir could equal the singing of ‘Lord, how long wilt Thou forget me’.

We barely spoke on the way home, for Miss Rogers had the sense not to ‘pat’ the impression by remarking on it. As our walk was ending I said, ‘Thank you for bringing me. In church this morning they sang the hymn, “There is a fountain filled with blood”, and I felt I couldn’t stand it any more.’ ‘You needn’t thank me,’ said Miss Rogers. ‘I saw your face in King’s, and it was ample reward.’

After that there were no more ordinary churches for me. While you are in Cambridge, see it, was henceforth my slogan. Consequently I seized the chance to go one evening to Trinity chapel, as we were told that it was one of the sights of Cambridge. It certainly was a strange sight. Of the Service I remember nothing. What impressed me was the mental agility of the men who 'told off' the undergraduates as they came in. Hundreds of young men in white surplices, all of them looking to me exactly alike, and there were the 'tellers' pricking each one off as he went in. Apparently this pricking meant that the young men *had* to attend whether they liked it or not—a new and uncomfortable idea to me.

From a religious point of view I found a visit to the University sermon at St. Mary's far more inspiring. Not so much the sermon itself, as to see the church packed with undergraduates who had not been compelled to come, and to hear the volume of sound when they burst into 'All people that on earth do dwell'. This had always seemed to me a very tame hymn, but given forth like that by so many voices it took on a kind of majesty.

Perhaps Miss Hughes had suffered from sabbatarianism as a child, for she took good care that our Sundays should have no dreariness. In the evening we were always invited to her room for a reading and discussion. Sometimes it was Emerson, sometimes Robertson of Brighton, sometimes modern poetry. There was a vogue for Browning just then, and we all enjoyed trying to understand him—the obscurer the poem the better. How worked up we all were over 'Bifurcation'! Miss Hughes had a solution of it worthy of Sherlock Holmes: the girl was suffering from tuberculosis, and the man couldn't make up his mind to marry her. I thought I saw the idea once, but no fresh reading will bring back to me Miss Hughes's idea, or indeed any other.

The number of new ideas, new friends, new experiences, all coming to me in a rush, made this time at Cambridge seem very long in retrospect, in fact a large slice of my life. I can hardly believe that it lasted only two terms, from September '85



to April '86. To make the utmost use of such a short course Miss Hughes arranged for us to pay visits to different types of schools in the neighbourhood of our homes during the vacation. She gave us personal introductions to the Heads and asked us to write our impressions for her to see. This proved one of the most useful bits of our training, for the Heads took quite an interest in showing us round. One of my expeditions was to Croydon High School, where I was told: 'We have no rules and no punishments.' This staggered me, after the rigours of the North London. 'Oh, it works all right,' said the charming Headmistress, 'the girls behave quite well without them; after all, nobody *wants* to forget books or to be untidy, and really there's no fun in being unruly if you're not punished for it, is there?'

A visit to a London Training College was a very different experience. I was allowed, along with several other visitors, to attend a 'Criticism Lesson'. A large number of the students, lecturers, and visitors were seated as in the auditorium of a theatre. A class of children occupied the 'well', and the student to be criticized stood in front of them and held forth. By no stretch of the imagination could it be called teaching, in such conditions. When the half-hour was up the children filed out, and the lecturer in charge (a well-known educationist) took the floor. He then called upon student after student to give her criticism of the lesson. It was bad enough for the poor young teacher, but it was almost worse for the critics, whose merciful little remarks were held up to scorn. The strain was almost more than I as a mere onlooker could bear. How thankful I was that my lot had fallen in a pleasanter place, as I thought of our informal criticisms at Cambridge; and I hardly wondered that Miss Hughes gave up quite early the practice of having more than two or three critics at a lesson.

### § 3

Those Christmas holidays were an unhappy contrast to all the previous ones I had known. My father's death had destroyed

the extreme hilarity of our childhood, but mother had always done her best to keep the season as gay as she could make it. But now Canonbury with all its jolly associations was a thing of the past. I know now that mother must have been eating her heart out while I was at Cambridge, living with her sister Lizzie in Lee, in a small house in a respectable road—the kind of road that has artistic architectural ornaments, but if you forget the number you can't tell which house is yours. Fortunately Charles came to spend part of the holidays with us, and enabled us to see the funny side of things. Aunt Lizzie herself was the main source of our amusement, from her adamant seriousness. Religion as ever was her absorbing hobby, but at this time it took the form of high anglicanism, for she had fallen under the spell of a young curate who had gone all ritualistic. His name was impressed on my memory, for she could never advance an opinion without introducing it with: 'As I was saying to Mr. Owen the other day'. It must have been out of sheer weariness of having this young man pushed down our throats that mother and I went to a nonconformist place close by. Lizzie, in spite of her many flirtations with non-conformity in the past, was distressed at such falling away.

'We get something to think about anyhow,' said mother.

'Of course the hymns are too emotional and the praying a bit *outré*; but that man Critchley has some fine ideas.'

'Oh!' cried Lizzie in horror, 'you don't mean to say that you listen to *him*! I'm told that if it weren't for the look of the thing he would be a Unitarian!'

'Come now, Lizzie, tell us what doctrines you hold that this man is likely to upset.'

Lizzie was nonplussed for a moment, and then said with great solemnity, 'I subscribe to all the Articles of the Church of England', and mother was merciful enough not to ask her if she had as much as read them.

Christmas Day was the nadir of that holiday. In all my experience of London weather I can recall no worse fog than the one persisting throughout those wretched hours. I remember counting six of them that I spent reading Sully's *Psychology*

by gaslight. Charles found his painting impossible, and mother had got hold of a realistic novel. Not even Lizzie could venture out to church. Dinner was the worst, for rich food without wine or merriment is more lowering than a vegetarian cutlet. I can quite see why we remember the pleasant things of life, and also the tragic, but can never fathom the reason for the lingering in the mind of mere dullness.

Charles was a real godsend during the blessed week that he spent with us, delighting mother with the sketches he was doing or planning, and me with his stories of his colleagues at Bedford.

One young master had difficulty in keeping discipline. 'Make a boy stand on a form if he is troublesome' was Charles's advice to this poor fellow. A few days later he came into Charles's room in distress: 'Look here, I've got *all* the boys standing on the forms; what do I do next?' Charles strode into the room and said 'Sit'. The boys sat down at once and Charles went out again and said to their master, 'There you are; now go in and carry on.'

One conversation in those holidays became memorable from later events. Looking idly through Charles's birthday book one day I saw another signature by the side of my own. 'Hullo!' said I. 'Who is this Arthur Hughes with the same birthday as mine?'

'Oh, he and I are great friends. He is the mathematics man at Bedford. But he is only doing teaching for a time. He is reading for the Bar.'

'The Bar. That's the best thing of all.'

'By the way, I've told him a lot about you, and your being at Cambridge, and reading Browning, and all that kind of thing, because he is great on poetry himself. So he wanted to know what you were like, for he has never met a girl yet who can cope with Browning.'

'I suppose you told him all the worst things about me that you could think of.'

'Oh, rather. And he's taken quite a fancy to that portrait of you as a little girl that's hanging in my room. He often

puffs his pipe at it and says he wonders what sort of woman you'll grow into.'

'What's he like?'

'A dark fiery Welshman, who thinks there's no country like Wales. And he lays down the law already about everything.'

'I like any one all crazy about his own country. I should like to meet him.'

'Well, I've promised to get you to meet one another some time soon. Where are you going to be after Cambridge?'

'No idea, Charles, anywhere from Land's End to John o' Groats.'

#### § 4

This business of where we were to go next began to press upon us about the middle of our second term. With no experience, and training not much believed in, but rather despised by those who had never had it, our main chance for getting a post was Miss Hughes's recommendation. Headmistresses were occasionally visiting Cambridge and seeking assistants, and several of us were dispatched for interviews. This word didn't seem half so humorous at first-hand as it had seemed when it concerned my brothers, and when my turn came for enduring an interview I had to summon up the kind of courage I used for going to the dentist—by five o'clock it will be over—a paraphrase of Macbeth's idea. Like Dym, I suffered from looking much younger than my years, few as these were; and my hair was cropped short; and my nervousness always took the form of grinning and saying foolish things. 'That's better than being tongue-tied like some of the others,' said Miss Hughes, 'and to help you through with moral support I'll lend you my bonnet.' I had never had such a thing on my head before, even for a charade, and the strings of it were enough to check any tendency to laugh. A group of the students made encouraging remarks to me as I set off. The appointed house was on the other side of the town, and I walked with the utmost care lest the bonnet should develop a list. Fortunately it was late afternoon and the light in the room poor. I answered lots

of questions and heard myself declaring ability to teach subject after subject, including, I fear, arithmetic. It was all in the future, anyhow, and the most pressing need of the moment was to keep the bonnet on. Once out, I hurried home, and to judge by the laughter of those who saw me arrive I must have looked a strange figure. But I was offered the post, and I am sure it was the bonnet that did it. All the others got posts too, so that the only drawback to the pleasure of our last weeks was the misery at the idea of their coming to an end. We tried to make the Saturday cocoas as lively as possible, and I did my bit with Charles's stories of the boys at Bedford. Of course these suggested anecdotes to Miss Hughes. She knew of an instance something like the poor fellow with the boys all standing on forms; only that in this case the teacher showed a ready wit. She had prepared an interesting lesson and was rather dashed to find on going into the classroom that the girls were all sitting with their backs to her desk. Instead of courting disaster by ordering them to turn round, she began her lesson as if there was nothing unusual; but she picked occasion to draw some illustrations on the board, and noticed the furtive attempts of several to turn round for a look. At last someone laughed, then the teacher laughed and suggested that they would all see better if they turned round, which they did amidst good-tempered general laughter.

For our final cocoa Miss Hughes herself was the host, and in order to keep us from getting melancholy she decreed fancy dress. And we were to keep our dress as secret as possible, so as to spring a surprise on the rest. Since my complete inability to sing in tune was one of the standing jokes, I determined that my contribution to the entertainment should be a song. To heighten the effect I would get myself up as a German student and render a very sentimental ditty in broken English. I was forced to get Bessie Jones's help in making a pair of black knickerbockers, and to apply to the housekeeper for some tow to make a wig. But my chief 'property' was to be a pipe, and this I meant to acquire in great secrecy. Not knowing in the least where to get one, I started off by myself one after-

noon to the district remote from Newnham Croft, away over Magdalene Bridge. Not daring to enter a respectable tobacconist's, I found a little combination shop, where they sold papers and birthday cards as well as tobacco—indeed, what mother used to quote from an old notice, 'mouse-traps and other sweetmeats'. I went in boldly and bought some acid-drops, and while the man was weighing them I confided to him that what I really wanted was a pipe—a large wooden one, 'not to smoke,' I hurriedly added, 'but for a fancy dress'. He smiled and disappeared under the counter, emerging after a prolonged hunt with the very thing, a pipe with a big bowl and a stem a foot long.

'But how much will that be?' I asked, fearing that such a beauty might strain my resources.

'You shall have it for nothing, Missy, and welcome; it's been lying by here for ages.'

Then I told him what I was going to do with it, and he encouraged me by saying he thought it a fine idea, and he showed me how to handle it effectively, stuff tobacco in with correct gestures, and so on.

Thus armed I was game for any folly, and drew forth joyful laughter as I made my unexpected flights from key to key in my song, 'Mein Jacob Schmidt, ver was you?' For an encore I rendered the most sentimental ballad I knew—'Some Day'.

We had clubbed together to give Miss Hughes an oak chest as a parting present, and her letter of thanks to us contained the following:

*'My dear Furies, you may rest assured that that chest shall be the last thing that goes to the pawnshop. It shall stand in my room as a memento of that happy year which I so much dreaded, but which (thanks to you) I have so much enjoyed.'*

## VIII

### *My First Post, 1886*

#### § 1

‘**P**OLAM, Darlington.’ These two words were all the information I had about my new work; for when I was in that bonnet I took in very little as to my duties. Mother was all alive at the idea of coming with me and seeing new kinds of people. ‘Very outspoken’ was the characteristic she had both heard and experienced of the north country. We could not actually live together, since it was a resident post, but the headmistress recommended to us a trustworthy landlady not far from the school. So with this name and address we started off together from King’s Cross in good spirits. On our arrival in Darlington we drove first to mother’s lodgings.

The word ‘lodgings’ casts a gloom over most people, but to me it brings a memory of a large sunny room in West Terrace, and of an old lady and her daughter of gentlest nature, who laid themselves out to have mother well-fed and tended. Indeed, I gathered that a real affection grew up between them, for Mrs. Steele used to have heart to heart talks with mother about times and customs that were past; she was too old for much active work, and I think Miss Steele was grateful for mother’s friendliness with her. Her stay with these people was one of the really happy periods of mother’s life, for she was free from cares, had time for reading and sketching, and had my daily visit with school gossip to look forward to.

By another stroke of luck it chanced that my brother Tom, who had not long been married, came north at the same time that we did. As classics master in Middlesbrough High School he was within a short railway journey of Darlington, and very seldom a week passed when he didn’t manage to run over to see us.

Polam was not a private school, but was under the management of some kind of Church Trust, about which I was never clear. 'Polam' was the name of a large house in extensive and well laid-out grounds, including lawns, woods, and a good-sized lake. Schoolrooms had been added as a kind of wing, beyond the conservatories; the pupils numbered about seventy day-girls and over a dozen boarders; the staff consisted of the headmistress, who did Arithmetic and what she called 'a little mathematics', a *Fräulein* for French and German, visiting masters for Music and Drawing, and me for the rest.

What appalled me was not the number of subjects assigned to me, but the elder boarders. I met these girls at supper on my arrival, and barely slept for fear of facing them in class on the morrow. Big girls they were, in long skirts and with their hair done up, looking older than I did, or felt, and apparently far more women of the world.

My first lesson was with a younger class, and it passed off without much trouble, but for the second hour I was faced by two rows of those formidable young women for a geography lesson. Few animals are more awe-inspiring than a group of English schoolgirls who are taking your measure. I had had no opportunity for preparing a lesson, so it was with assumed nonchalance that I asked: 'What country are you to be taking next?'

'Italy,' was the lack-lustre reply.

'Oh, then we shall want a map,' said I as casually as I could, but thanking my stars for that map of the Mediterranean I had practised for the matriculation. With careless ease I turned to the board and executed the western half of my masterpiece. When I looked round the class had come to life, and amazement sat on the previously disdainful faces.

'Did you do that out of your head?' exclaimed one girl.

At this I spread out my hands, to show that there was no book or atlas near me, and said, 'No deception, ladies and gentlemen.' When a laugh greeted this my nervousness had entirely gone, and we all set out to fill up the map, as by a kind of dentistry I extracted a few of the 'natural features' from the



class. While the Alps were being laboriously chalked in, I muttered 'Poor Hannibal!'

Overhearing this the girl nearest me said, 'Hannibal? That's a funny name—it's what our old horse at home is called.'

'Funny name!' I said, 'but surely you know who Hannibal was?'

Not one of the class had so much as heard of him, and when I looked shocked and said, 'Why, he was one of the greatest men that ever lived' there was an urgent demand, 'Do tell us about him.' Only too glad to get away from the products and industries of Italy (which I felt to be approaching) I plunged into Hannibal's boyhood, and took those girls with genuine excitement from Africa through Spain, over the Rhône (with a sketch of an elephant thrown in), across the Alps and down to victory in Italy. Then pacing up and down the classroom I acted Fabius, wintered in Capua, made a crescendo to Cannae, cursed the authorities in Carthage, and was hesitating about attacking Rome when the bell rang to the accompaniment of groans.

I had taken my first fence, but there was another to be taken that I had not even suspected. During those first few days one after another of the elder boarders would come up to me at any odd time of the day to ask me the meaning of something—anthropomorphic, bicentenary, protoplasm, and other long words. I gave the meaning briefly, but one day it was 'upanishad'.

'I have no idea what that means,' said I, 'fetch the book where you came across it, and we shall be able to give a guess at it from the context.'

The expectant group looked uncomfortable, and then confessed that they hadn't got any book, but had picked it out of the dictionary. Then they told me that my predecessor had always explained a word if she knew it, but if she didn't she would not admit her ignorance but would say, 'Don't bother me about a mere word, look it up in the dictionary, dear.' This sport lost its zest as soon as I admitted ignorance, and we

laughed together at the absurdity of pretending to know everything.

After this we were friends, and sincerer friends than those few elder girls I have never had. They began to take an interest in their work, and induced me to join in their play, which chiefly consisted of tennis and rowing on the lake. They had the north-country outspokenness and were extremely matter-of-fact; their intelligence and interest in almost any topic gave a real fillip to my daily round. One day the eldest came to me, with the others attendant, to say, 'Miss Thomas, dear, we think something ought to be done about your hair.' Ever since leaving Cambridge I had been trying to look more grown-up by cajoling my hair into a knob with hairpins, but with the utmost pulling I could produce nothing much bigger than half a crown. So I asked these girls to try their hand at it. After several efforts they came to the conclusion that it would be better cropped short. When I saw Tom at the week-end I consulted him on the point. 'Well dear,' said he, 'you may as well have it cut, for you couldn't possibly look worse than you do now.' And on this hint I cut.

While all lessons with the elder classes were sheer pleasure, those with the younger ones gave me more difficulty. Soon it became clear that 'giving lessons' as we had done in the Training College, when each one was an adventure, was a different matter from teaching day after day the same children in subjects that were already dull to them. Instead of giving them plenty of jolly and simple things to do, I was foolish enough to try to explain things. I have come to the conclusion that children are endowed with some protective instinct that smells an approaching explanation and leads them to curl up like a cat in a thunderstorm till it is over. However, one day I really got the attention of the class to what I proclaimed as one of the most important things in life; and then I made clear what 'transitive' meant to every Christian eye. I wound up with a challenging '*Break* is a transitive verb. You can't break without breaking something. You can't give me a sentence with *break* in it unless there is something that you do

break.' Hardly were the words out of my mouth when I thought how they might quote Tennyson at me, but a glance at the class reassured me on that point. One little girl, however, appeared to be in mental struggle, and then up shot her hand with a triumphant 'I can!' An expectant stare at her from the rest, and then came forth this:

'I tried to break the glass, but couldn't. You see, I didn't break it.'

What should I do? My solution was to laugh, say 'Right you are, Elsie,' and pass on to another point. No one minded, of course, or inquired further of the matter. But I learnt more psychology from Elsie than from many hours of studying Sully. I returned to the simple grammar of my childhood for these little girls. In this style:

*Interjections show surprise,  
As, Oh! how pretty, Ah! how wise.*

The hour-long lessons were a trial with the younger ones, for I hadn't learnt the technique of making the pupils do all the work. But this soundest of principles was discovered by me in the following way. The period of the week most dreaded by me was an hour and a quarter, at the close of Friday, assigned to reading. At first it was greeted by the pupils cordially, for my predecessor had allowed them to 'read round' and when once the turn of each was past she engaged in her own affairs. But I dodged them, and they had no peace. The only available Reader was more than stale, and already decorated with pipe in the mouths of the persons illustrated. 'Oh, don't let's have this one,' was the inevitable murmur whichever one I chose. Silent reading, even if there had been any books for it, would have been considered laziness on my part by the headmistress, who was a martinet. She had scolded me once up and down for having dismissed this dreadful class five minutes before time. An *hour* of horribly bad reading, with an undercurrent of insubordination, was bad enough, but it was that extra quarter of an hour that drove me to desperation. Surely heavenly inspiration is not confined to solemn matters, or else whence came my idea?

'Have you girls got any books at home?' said I.

'Yes, a lot,' was the rather indignant reply from several.

'Next Friday, then, I want each of you to bring to school any book you like, and read a bit out of it to us all.'

Questions rained on me—Did I mean it? Would poetry do? How long must it be? Must it be a school-book? May it be really *anything* we like? May it be funny? . . .

'It doesn't matter whether it's long or short, comic or tragic, poetry or prose, grown-up or childish. But there are three things you must remember. First, it must be something that will interest us. Secondly, you must practise it at home, reading it aloud to your mother or in an empty room, till you can do it really well. And lastly, you must keep it a dead secret from the rest of the class, because we all want to have a little surprise over each reading; now rehearse the three points to remember: interesting—well prepared—secret.'

It was as though a magician had waved a wand over the class. Friday afternoon became the star turn of the week. The children were seen coming to school with volumes of all sizes wrapped up in newspaper for purposes of protection and concealment, and when the turn came to read there was a solemn unveiling of a fat Shakespeare, or a wedding-present-looking Tennyson, or a tattered copy of *Alice*. I had prepared a chapter of *Uncle Remus* to read to them if the supply of matter failed. But it never did. There was such eagerness to read that I had to put names into a box and draw out by hazard. I enjoyed myself as much as they did, for they chose quite good stuff and rendered it in entirely their own fashion; and of course I was secretly glorying in the vast improvement in the reading without the slightest effort on my part. No teaching or criticism was necessary, for we agreed at the beginning that any one who couldn't hear easily, or didn't understand a word, was to put up her hand, and the reader had to repeat, or make her own explanations. The few boarders in the class were at first a difficulty, because they lacked the home for finding a strange book and a mother to practise on. So I asked the elder boarders to help them with suggestions and rehearsals,

and to keep all a secret from me. I well remember one of those Friday afternoons. A rather sentimental girl rose solemnly to announce the title of her poem, 'Speak gently'.

I couldn't resist, 'Oh yes, I know the poem, a good one it is, doesn't it go like this—"Speak gently to your little boy and beat him when he sneezes"? ' It was some minutes before order was restored, and our faces straight for the proper poem. I was glad to note that the reader had laughed heartily herself, and a little apology from me made her quite happy. The next contribution was also a moral poem, but with a touch of humour in it, and I learnt it by heart:

*'Well,' said the duckling, 'well,' as he looked at his broken shell,  
'If this is the world I dreamt about, it's a very great pity I ever came  
out.'*

*'My dear,' said the duck, 'my dear, don't think that the world is  
here!*

*The world is a pond, and it lies out there; you will soon see life, so  
don't despair.'*

*But the eyes of the duckling looked beyond the reeds and weeds of that  
muddy pond.*

*It's certainly most atrocious luck, to be born with a soul when  
you're only a duck.*

## § 2

The headmistress was a martinet about her assistants, but lazy about her own work, and as the term went on I found that she was pushing ever more and more duties on me. For instance, the visiting master for Drawing was obliged to take a large class that spread over two communicating rooms. When he was in one room the discipline in the other declined. So I was asked to give up my free afternoon—usually spent in a walk with mother—in order to sit in the younger Drawing division and eye the children. I soon found that what they wanted was not eyeing but something interesting to draw. After a little furtive helping I began to supply this need, and the master was only too glad to leave me to it, and as soon as

the headmistress heard of it she asked me to take on the teaching of Drawing regularly. I ought to have borne in mind Tony's dictum about servants: 'I never think much of a servant who is willing to undertake duties that she has not bargained for.'

Mother had noticed that I was getting fagged out with the ups and downs of my first term, and she had been busy devising a summer holiday. A little family reunion seemed to be indicated, for Tom was within easy reach, and Charles could very likely come from Bedford. In her varied explorations she had come across a little fishing village called Runswick Bay, that fascinated her artistic sense. She thought it would also please Charles, who had written to say that if we could get some nice, damp, inconvenient habitation that was picturesque, he would join us. It certainly filled the bill as far as being damp, inconvenient, and picturesque, but it failed on the point of habitation. Mother could find no cottage that she could fancy herself entering, let alone asking for 'rooms' in it. She climbed back to Hinderwell again, determined to try some other place along that lovely coast. There was a long wait for the next train, and she passed the time by confiding her disappointment to the stationmaster.

'Well, mum,' said he, 'why not put up here in the station?'

'Good gracious!' said mother, 'I had no idea that any one could *live* in a station.'

He thereupon showed her what he could do. There was a real sitting-room, right on the platform, most convincing, with lace curtains, and fern, and red table-cloth, and a fine view of the railway and signal-box. Tucked away behind the little Booking-office was a smaller room that would do for meals, and a tiny kitchen beyond. Along the platform was a waiting-room that could be used as an extra sitting-room if required. Over all, going the length of the platform, were three bedrooms. It was like a house in a two-dimensional land. He ended the tour of inspection by saying, 'My wife is a good cook, and you will be very comfortable.'

And so we were. Tom and his wife, and Charles and I, and

most certainly mother, were all of us children enough to be enchanted with our new mode of life, and the fun never grew stale. Four trains passed to and fro every day—two 'to' and two 'fro'. One was due to rattle in during our dinner hour, and we always had to run to the front room to see how many alighted. There was usually a half-finished picture on Charles's easel by the window, and we enjoyed watching the passengers trying to look at it without seeming inquisitive. Most of them had come for an afternoon at the sea.

Runswick Bay was enough to attract any one, when once the approach to it had been overcome. A rough stony lane led down to it from Hinderwell, and after that a path went steeply down to the sea, winding in and out among the primitive fishermen's cottages. To say that it smelt like Caliban would be merely flattery. But what matter? Once down by the sea and the place was a paradise. The insanitary old cottages took on another aspect, nestling among the rocks and verdure of the hillside; and in the foreground there were the boats and fishing-tackle on the firm white sand in a brilliant setting of sea and sky. Mother and Charles were busy sketching all day long, whilst we others read and bathed and basked. I had brought *Rudder Grange* with me, and recommended it to Charles, because it described the same kind of odd dwelling that we were in. Mother and I slept in the room next to his, and one morning we were alarmed by great bursts of laughter coming from him. We were alarmed because it was so extraordinary. Charles made others laugh but never laughed himself, and we feared that something serious was the matter—a brain attack or something. I jumped up and knocked at his door.

'What's the matter, Charles?'

'Oh,' he managed to say with fresh outbursts, 'we are like the people in *Rudder Grange*, we live in a stationary wash-tub!'

Mother and I liked to hear that laughter, for it was a sign of the new enjoyment of life that had begun for Charles. We had been troubled about him long enough. On my father's death he was a sensitive, highly-strung boy of seventeen, the

only one of us ever likely to shine, and he was obliged to take the only job that offered—one that involved long hours as a clerk in a sordid factory in Kingsland. He got away from it after a few months, but not until it had half killed him, body and spirit. But now he liked his work and friends at Bedford, and had ample chance to carry on his painting.

On one of his expeditions round Hinderwell for fresh subjects Charles had come across the picturesque village of Ellerby, and on the following Sunday evening he suggested that we might all walk over there to church.

‘Has it got a church?’ we asked.

‘Bound to have,’ said Charles, ‘though I didn’t happen to notice one; we may as well go to find out where it is.’

It was a lovely evening, the cliffs and sea at their best, and we were half inclined to cut church and continue our walk, especially as there was no church visible, although the whole extent of the village lay stretched in front of us. But mother suddenly said, ‘Look at those two girls—they have the unmistakable walk of people going to church—let’s ask them where it is.’ Yes, they were going, and said they would lead the way, if we would follow. Still no symptom of a church, and presently they began to climb a ladder, placed against the side of a cottage. We followed up and found ourselves in a large attic. There were plenty of people already seated, and there were more coming up behind us. The ceiling was so low that Charles, in getting up too suddenly for a hymn, hit his head against a rafter. There was a harmonium and a real clergyman, and the familiar evening prayers, but all I remember is the text of the sermon: ‘There is a path that no fowl knoweth, and that the vulture’s eye hath not seen.’ This lovely bit of poetry harmonized with my mood, for I was imagining all the time that we were a band of early Christians, gathered together in our secret upper room, in imminent danger of a raid by our persecutors.

This was our last walk all together, because Tom and his wife had to return to Middlesbrough the next day. But Charles had another fortnight, and mother had been hunting



round to find a place that would give him a greater variety of subjects for his work. At Sandsend she had found the very thing to delight him—a rickety house right against the sea-wall. It was a tiny inn, with floors aslant and narrow stairs, each one a foot high. But, as Charles pointed out, we shouldn't spend our time going up and down stairs, and the view from the sitting-room window was superb—a big stretch of sand, the changing sea, a straggling row of fishermen's cottages, and Whitby in the distance, with its abbey standing out against the sky. Moreover, we found a glorious hinterland in the Mulgrave woods, and Charles was embarrassed with his riches. Every day of his fortnight was carefully planned, almost every hour. He would do a morning's work on one picture, and an afternoon's on another, so that the lights should be right for each. He decided all his lights and 'values' at the outset, and never touched anything indoors. We both wished that mother would follow this rule, for she ruined her sketches by improving on them afterwards, and thus never getting the clean, decided effect of Charles's.

We had no sooner discovered the charm of Sandsend than mother suggested my asking Mary Wood to spend the rest of the holiday with us. She and I corresponded fairly regularly since our school-days, and she has kept several of my letters. Here is part of the one I wrote inviting her to Sandsend:

*As to economy, the fare is very little. 'You must do without a pair of gloves,' as Miss Buss used to say. I believe she considered that that would raise untold sums. It used to puzzle me rather because I did go without heaps of pairs of gloves, but never received any addition to my wealth thereby. Problem leading to a simple equation: How many pairs of gloves will it take to go without to be able to go to Sandsend to see an old friend? Solution: Let  $x$  = the number of pairs of gloves required. Let  $a$  = the fare to Sandsend. Then  $x = a$ —old friend's affection.  $\therefore x = a - \infty \therefore x = 0$  Ans. 0 pairs of gloves required to be gone without to go to Sandsend to see an old friend. So you have only to come. I am afraid there is a fallacy somewhere, but that is a detail.*

When she arrived we found that the inn had used up the bedroom we had designed for her, but we were told that another was to be had in the village. Mother thought it best that I should share this strange room with her, so we went forth together to find it. The village consisted of no more than the row of fishermen's cottages along the front. Outside the one mentioned to us was seated an old fisherman, very deaf. When at last we had made him understand what we had come for, he hauled himself up and climbed his narrow little stair, and then opened the door of the 'room'. It was about eight feet square, almost entirely filled by a four-poster bed. We could just squeeze along past this huge structure.

'This will never do,' said I.

'Oh yes, it will,' said Mary, 'it's the funniest room I have ever been in. But', she added after a pause, 'it doesn't smell as if it had been lived in lately.'

'Nay rather,' said I, 'as if it had been died in lately. That old man looked a bit sad, perhaps his wife has recently. . .?'

At this Mary pushed along to open the tiny window. But it was not made to open. After a lot of shaking and shifting we managed to lift it bodily from its moorings, and stood it on the floor. After this we felt better and 'took' the room. The old feather-bed was comfortable enough, but very early every morning we were awakened, positively awakened, by the smell of the vilest tobacco known to man.

'Wherever can it come from?' we puzzled. I thought I discerned a tiny hole in the ceiling, that must lead into the attic where the old man slept. But Mary had a more subtle suggestion: 'It comes through no visible hole, it's everywhere around; it comes in by osmosis.' From this it might be supposed that Mary had been going in for science. At school we had both indeed dabbled in a little chemistry in the lab., with bunsen burners and sinks and test-tubes, but our enthusiasm cooled after Bessie Davies let loose the  $H_2S$  on us one day, and little remained to us but a few choice words, which we employed, like Humpty Dumpty, to mean just what we wanted them to.

We spent our days mostly in long walks and arguments, or in watching mother or Charles at their sketching. One of these walks gave rise to our attendance at a church service as peculiar in my experience as the one at Ellerby. Mary and I had gone with Charles for a walk to Lythe, where he had planned to make a drawing of the church. He was just starting on it when out came the vicar to see what was going on. After a general chat he said:

'I hope that none of you will turn up to our service on Sunday evening.'

'Oh, why?' we all exclaimed, astonished at such an unusual request from a vicar.

'My organist is ill. The Morning Service doesn't matter so much—very few come—but in the evening all the villagers come and will feel dull and disappointed without a bit of singing, and to tell the truth I'm keeping off every one I meet.'

'Shall I help?' said Charles. 'I always play the organ in our school chapel, and if I practise a bit on your organ beforehand, I daresay it would go all right.'

'How good of you!' Then he hesitated. 'But our small boy who blows is stupid enough at the best of times, and would be paralysed at the thought of blowing for a stranger.'

'Oh, that's nothing, my sister here and her friend will blow for me. We can go and have a practice as soon as I've had an hour at this sketch, and we can put in another to-morrow.'

The vicar went off delighted, saying that he should let his people know that they were to have a distinguished organist on Sunday evening.

Charles soon showed us how to blow, and we managed to avoid jerkiness, and the following morning, when he had finished his painting, we quite astonished him with our proficiency. We took it in turns, and he couldn't decide which of us was best. Mother was specially pleased, because she had always wanted to hear Charles play the organ, and we four set off on Sunday evening in great pride. The vicar had been as good as his word, and the little church was packed. Charles had ventured on some favourite hymns and psalm-tunes, but

what we long remembered was his voluntary, 'O rest in the Lord', and Handel's 'Largo' at the close.

Owing to the different dates of term beginning, Charles had to leave for Bedford two days before we had to return to Darlington. I went to the little station at Sandsend to see him off.

'Is there any chance of your coming south?' he asked, 'because I want you to meet Hughes, and he wants to meet you.'

'I shall have to go to Cambridge for my Teacher's Diploma, but not till next year, because you can't take it till you're twenty, and I shan't be that till October.'

'All right. Then we must put off the meeting till then. We will manage for you to have a week-end at Bedford just before or after, as it suits. Our headmaster and his wife know about you and will gladly put you up.'

The train came in, and to my intense surprise he gave me an affectionate kiss, the only one, so far as I remember, that he ever gave me. That little scene is impressed on my memory, for I never saw him again.

### § 3

The autumn term at Polam began much the same as before, but after a week or two the headmistress broke to us that she was leaving at Christmas. The fact itself required no 'breaking', for the only feeling anybody seemed to have for her was a faint dislike. But further implications were disclosed bit by bit. Although we did not suspect it till much later, she was leaving a sinking ship. We ought to have guessed that the finances of the Association were rocking when we heard that Polam was to be given up. Next term the school was to migrate to another house in Darlington, called West Grove. At the same time we were told that there would be a large influx of new pupils and another assistant teacher. This looked well, for mother and I were too green in the methods of school business to be aware that you can have plenty of pupils if you don't mind

what they are like, and also you can have assistants if their salaries can be avoided.

The new head was still less attractive than the former one, and had not even the advantage of being a martinet. The new pupils were an unruly set, and my new colleague had no influence on them whatever. How her classes went I don't know, but her 'supervision' times were so noisy that I was requisitioned to take her place, and she could not even be trusted to take the boarders out for a walk in crocodile form. She was a good sort, and I didn't want her to lose her post, so I took her turns. But it would have been a good thing for every one if we had both lost our posts.

Evidently there was iron economy required to keep that school going at all. It was in the meals that we felt the change immediately. How well I remember our first supper under the new management. The staff hoped for something rather special after the inadequate midday school dinner. A large dish piled high with potatoes baked in their jackets was placed in front of the head, who proceeded to serve them out. I looked upon this as an original kind of hors-d'œuvre. But *nothing* followed. 'An Irish supper—a bit of a change', we said to one another afterwards. But this dish of baked potatoes came on every night, and *nothing* else at all. Our other meals we had with the boarders, and of these I think Squeers would have been ashamed. There was nothing at all but extremely thick chunks of bread, with butter scraped on them, for breakfast, tea, and the boarders' supper. The midday dinner was sometimes a piece of nondescript 'meat', but more often it was a slab of fish that I believe was eel, but looked like a portion of whale. This was followed by a mass of rice cooked in water. It was no wonder that on such a diet the girls were almost impossible to manage. With my extra supervision duties I could never have kept going if I had not been able to rush round to mother's rooms. Here Miss Steele would always have ready for me some nourishing food that I could take quickly, usually a bowl of generous soup and some cake or buns to take back with me, to share with my colleague. Mother found

no increase for these items in the weekly account, and protested; but Miss Steele maintained that they cost nothing, because she had all the ingredients in the house. My colleague and I used to make ourselves odd cups of cocoa with the aid of a spirit-lamp and a tin of condensed milk. Miss Steele's buns and cakes made a great addition to these feasts; but the fact remained that we were not sufficiently nourished for our work. Confusion and disorder reigned throughout the school, and my only teaching pleasure came from those few elder girls who were doing well with their Latin, and really enjoying the second book of the *Aeneid*.

I could always rely on mother for some mental stimulus, and she cared not whence she derived it. One Sunday evening she carried me off to a Salvation Army meeting, to hear Mrs. Booth, who more than fulfilled our expectation that we should have a 'peep below'. The worst of mother was that the absurdity of the affair would strike her at inappropriate moments, and I would look round to see her doubled up with ill-suppressed laughter; fortunately this had a sobering influence on me. Political meetings were safer in this way, for plenty of jokes would be forthcoming in the speeches, and then we could laugh at what we liked. Home Rule was still the burning question, and we were open to conviction in any direction, being totally ignorant of Irish affairs. At one of these meetings we were invited to sit on the platform, with David Dale in the chair, and O'Connor as the chief speaker. We owed this distinction to some Quaker acquaintances of mother's. Both she and I were strangely attracted by the Quakers and their religious ceremonies, or rather lack of them. But we could never bring ourselves to attend one of their meetings. 'I couldn't go, dear,' said mother, 'in case of fire.' By this I imagine she meant that a sudden sense of the ridiculous might seize her during the silence. It can be well understood that I didn't encourage her to risk it.

To add to my miseries at the school, I was hardly a day free from toothache, in spite of many visits to the dentist. He was a kind fellow, and no doubt understood that it was an empty

stomach rather than a bad tooth that was the root of the mischief. One morning Fräulein said to me, 'You look crushed.'

'Yes, I am crushed,' said I, 'what with these senseless corrections, and endless supervision, and a raging tooth, and——'

'Ach, no! Sink of what a grade man said, "Nature, she crush me. But I am grader zan Nature. She crushes, and knows not zat she crushes. I am crushed, but I know zat I am crushed."'

For the life of me I couldn't see what good you got by knowing that you were crushed, but I felt vaguely the pathos of such a philosophy in the mouth of an ill-fed and over-worked foreigner.

A worthy soul who visited the school in some undefined capacity approached me one day from quite another angle.

'I think you would find this little book helpful. Last Lent I read a chapter every day—not exactly as a penance, but to make me realize the power of sin.'

I accepted the loan politely, but with little intention of reading it. However, the title was more attractive than her introductory remarks—*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. When I returned it after a few days I said I thought it a capital story.

'Didn't it frighten you?'

'Not a bit.'

At that week-end mother and I were paying a visit to Middlesbrough, to see Tom's little son; the journey involved some tiresome waitings, and to beguile the way I told this story to mother. She was always the perfect audience; whether she was shown a sketch, or listened to music, or heard a tale, she managed to make it more important, more meaningful. I used to notice how the teller of an anecdote or an adventure would always tell it to *her*, and seek her eye, whatever the company. Well, this story about poor Dr. Jekyll, that had seemed to me as I read it merely a good yarn, became so terrible as I unfolded it and watched mother's increasing excitement, that I caught her terror, and there we stood on a gloomy junction platform, staring at one another and clutching

each other as I reached the climax. Perhaps a weird story always *tells* better than it *reads*.

One evening in June I had skipped away from the school and its worries to have an hour with mother. She was showing me a half-finished water-colour. 'Now remember what Charles says, don't go touching it up indoors, but go to the same spot to-morrow and get the same lights.' I was just saying this when Miss Steele came in with a telegram. It was from Bedford—'your son very ill—come at once'.

'Pack your handbag, mother, while I run to the station to see when the next train goes.'

It was not till midnight, so there was time for me to go round to the school to let them know I should be late, and unfortunately time for mother and me to speculate on what the illness could be. It was a bolt from the blue, for although Charles had been delicate from his birth he had never been definitely ill. And we had had the rosiest accounts from him lately. He had spent the Easter holiday in a sketching tour in Devon and Cornwall, and since then he had begun a series of water-colours to illustrate a book he meant to write on the country-side of Bunyan.

Next day I had a telegram from mother at Bedford that was obviously vague, so I guessed things were serious, and wrote at once to Tony in Cornwall and to Dym in Plymouth, asking them to go to Bedford at once. The elder girls at school were splendidly sympathetic, saying very little and working very hard during lesson time. It was two mornings later that I was giving them Latin, in a front room, and we all saw a telegraph boy walking up to the front door. In a minute a servant came into the room and handed me a telegram. They were rare things in those days, and there was little doubt what the message was. Without opening it I thrust it into my pocket, and shall never forget the look those few girls gave me before they all bent over their conditional sentences as if nothing else in the world mattered. North-country people may be brusque and outspoken, but for a sure touch of sympathy I have seldom seen the behaviour of that class equalled.



Charles had died that morning. Mother and Tony came on together to Darlington after a few days, and I had more particulars from them. He had been taken suddenly ill, and though apparently conscious now and again, he was never able to speak. Mother, Dym, Tony, the school nurse, and one of the masters took turns to watch by his bedside. This master had been with him through the night before he died, and to him (I learnt long afterwards) Charles had made with painful effort a gesture of affection.

Mother, Dym, and Tony were full of gratitude to this master, 'a Mr. Hughes', who acted like a son in helping them to arrange Charles's few belongings and pack his many pictures. They were anxious to have him buried in the beautiful little churchyard of Elstow, but there were serious local difficulties, and it was not until they had shown his pictures of the village and its surroundings that they obtained permission.

We ought to have been equally grateful to Tony, but she was always on the spot in any trouble, and we had come to look upon her as part of the scheme of Providence. To her Charles's death was as great a blow as to mother—greater, I think, for she had understood his artistic capability from his early boyhood, and had continually urged him to devote all his energy to it. And now to lose him at the age of twenty-four, just when he had been able to sell many of his pictures, and was hoping to give up school work, have a little studio somewhere in Cornwall, and paint to his heart's delight! It is surely a nice point whether a physical mother or a spiritual mother feels bereavement more.

'That Mr. Hughes you speak of,' said I, 'is the one Charles talked to me about, and wanted me to meet this summer.'

'Yes,' said Tony, 'he seemed to know a good deal about you. And so did the headmaster and his wife. They have made all arrangements for you to come to spend a week-end when you have to go to Cambridge for your examination.'

'Oh well, that's all off now—without Charles there's no point in going to Bedford.'

'Yes, but they think you would like to see his grave in that

lovely churchyard, the chapel where he played the organ for the boys, and his room and everything, and meet his friends. They sent a most pressing invitation, didn't they, Mary?"

"They couldn't have been kinder," said mother, "but Molly must decide for herself whether to go or not."

When Tony and I were alone, "You go, dear," said she, "Mr. Hughes is so anxious to see you, and he has been so good to us that I think you really *ought*."

So it was arranged that I should spend the week-end (before the examination) at Bedford, towards the end of June. That examination was rather a godsend at the moment, for it took my mind off other things. I had to look up a few facts about Vittorino da Feltre, and Gerson, and Jacotot, and people like that. I could do plenty of jargon about Sensation and Perception and the Laws of Association, but did not consider the bits of psychology I had picked up while teaching to be 'examination-worthy' or that they would go down with a Cambridge examiner. Methods of teaching had become a part of me, but I had to look up the 'rules for questioning' so as to have them at my finger-tips.

As the time drew near, any nervousness about the examination was lost in my nervousness at encountering all the strangers at Bedford, and the large staff of masters.

"But the headmaster's wife is delightful, and has three dear little children, and Mr. Hughes writes to say that he will meet you at the station."

"How shall I know him? What is he like?"

"Short and thick-set," said mother, "very plain, dark, a good bit older than Charles, short-sighted, and very severe-looking, not jolly a bit. He told us that Charles used to call him Diogenes, because he took such a gloomy view of life."

"I don't care what he's like—he was good to Charles," put in Tony.

"He has a big moustache," went on mother ruthlessly, "and he plays the fiddle. He tries to do water-colours, but of course is no good at it."

I was prepared for something pretty bad, deceived as ever

by mother's trick of putting one off what she really hoped one would like. To stave off nervousness on the journey I went over all the bits of 'book-psychology' that I could think of. As the train slowed down for Bedford, I took my small bag from the rack and braced myself for the task of hunting about the crowd for a man who presumably would be looking vaguely expectant. What if I made a mistake, or saw no one at all likely? We drew up, and I jumped down into the usual platform medley. I had hardly landed when some one came briskly up to me, shook me firmly by the hand, and said, 'There's a cab waiting. What luggage have you?' I handed him my bag with, 'That's all. Are you Mr. Hughes?' 'Yes, come along.' The headmaster's wife was in the cab, and greeted me with, 'You will be just in time for tea, and they're all expecting you. There's a big cricket match on.'

That tea on the lawn was ambrosial; it was a glorious June afternoon, and the men in their white flannels reminded me of my childhood when my father used to have cricketing parties; and at this time there was a specially grand tea on account of the Jubilee celebrations. No one mentioned Charles, but I felt from the manner of each of the masters as he chatted to me that he was doing his best to make my visit a jolly one—all except Mr. Hughes, who had disappeared. As they were dispersing again for cricket I heard his voice at my side, 'I want you to see the shadow cast by the big tree on Elstow church. Your brother made several studies of it. In this light it will be showing to perfection. Come along, and these roses I have just been gathering are for you to put on his grave.'

Our walk of about a quarter of a mile lay through some cornfields, in full view of the church and the shadow on it. We passed the village green and the old moot-house and threaded our way through the churchyard to the newly made grave. As I laid the roses on it Mr. Hughes said, 'He will wake and remember and understand.' Those were practically the only words spoken during that walk. The evening and the next day were made as bright as possible for me by my host and hostess, till Sunday afternoon when I had to leave for

Cambridge. Mr. Hughes saw me off at the station, still silent, but just before the train came in he said, 'Your brother was teaching me to paint, but I'm no hand at it. I've made a little sketch of the corner of the churchyard showing his grave, where we stood together on Saturday, and perhaps you will accept it; but it is only for you, and not to be shown to any one else.' He then handed it to me and silence fell again. But just as the train was about to start he said: 'We haven't talked much, you and I, have we? But never mind, we have all the future before us.'

bridge, and they think you know a lot, and may ride the high horse—absurd idea, of course.’

The Cornish cousins were divided into two camps. Tony ruled at the old original home of Reskadinnick, and uncle Joe had a large house in Camborne. Not a day passed without interchange between the two families, so that it mattered little at which house one was staying. It chanced on this occasion that mother and I were to be in Camborne; and immediately I felt the tonic of uncle Joe’s large family of boys and girls—so entirely remote from my recent school atmosphere. A very large family at the rectory, too, had now grown up, and were continually dropping in for tennis, or sudden picnic excursions, or merely gossip.

A few days after our arrival there was a tea-party at Reskadinnick, and conversation was flowing genially when one of the rectory girls asked me what the modern young man was like. I had no idea, but was not to be behindhand with news, so I said (inventing freely):

‘The last young exquisite I met was very easy to get on with, because you knew what he would say. If your tone suggested something pleasant, he would say, “How awfully jolly!” and if your tone suggested the unpleasant, he would say, “How jolly awful!”’ My companion thought this funny and laughed, but then turned seriously to me with, ‘They told us you were clever, but you aren’t a *bit*!’

I enjoyed this compliment, and it gave me my cue. I must keep dark the fact that I was working for my degree, and my interest in books and pictures and politics. As heartily as I could I entered into the gossip about love affairs and ‘the length to which some girls will go’. However, I found it convenient to cultivate the reputation for being a bit odd. Oddity didn’t matter, it was only knowledge that was to be avoided. A visitor caught me one day reading *Sartor Resartus*; hanging over my shoulder for a while she at length asked, ‘Do you read this for pleasure?’ When I nodded, she breathed ‘Oh’ and said no more.

Tony had a little surprise for me one day. When she was in

Bedford she had taken a great liking to Arthur Hughes (not only out of gratitude for his kindness to Charles), and she had begged him to come down to Reskadinnick for a visit. And now she had a letter from him saying he could run down from his home in Wales for a few days—ten at most—and if convenient he would come at once. 'We must do our best to make him welcome, and show him something of the Cornwall that Charles loved so dearly. I've written to tell him to come as soon as he likes.'

As it turned out there was little left for mother and me to do in the way of making him welcome. The cousins at Reskadinnick did all. They took him on expeditions to the points of interest, and it was only in brief snatches that I had any chat with him. But I gathered that he had been impressed with Carn Brea, which had seemed to him at first a small affair; they went up its slopes, to see the huge blocks of granite, some of them upright and still showing an intended arrangement, and the remains of an ancient castle. Another of his expeditions I greatly envied him—uncle William took him down a tin mine—not a thing for a girl to do! He told me of the curious shovel used by the miners, shaped like the spade on a pack of cards, of unknown antiquity and supposed to be the identical pattern used by the early Phoenician settlers.

'Mr. Hughes admires the North cliffs,' said one of my cousins to me, 'but he is insufferable in the way he sneers at our little trout-stream, and almost patronizes Carn Brea—for ever making comparisons with Wales. So we mean to take him to the Land's End, and rub his nose in *that*.' 'A good idea,' said I, but didn't add what I felt—that I wished they would ask me to come too. But the very rarity and brevity of our talks together made them more significant. For instance, it was a day or two after the drive to the Land's End that a group of the Reskadinnick cousins and friends dropped in at uncle Joe's, and Mr. Hughes and I were together for a few moments in the garden. 'Your North cliffs are always lovely, and Perran-porth takes a lot of beating,' said he, 'but the Land's End! It turned out a grey and blustery day, and the Atlantic

was coming out strong. There is surely nothing like it. I felt I could have stayed there for ever' (here some one was joining us) 'if you could be there with me.'

Mother and I were both invited to a 'musical evening' at Reskadinnick, and Mr. Hughes, who never went anywhere without his fiddle, was able to add considerably to the entertainment. A trio of Gounod's *Ave Maria*, with one cousin at the piano, another singing, and the fiddle accompanying, pleased me greatly, and at the end I asked Mr. Hughes to pass me the musical score to look at. He came over to me and handed it with the words, very much in inverted commas, "and afterward, what else?" He knew that I should recognize the quotation from *The Patriot*, and that no one else would.

Towards the end of his visit, for some unknown and blessed reason (probably due to Tony, like most good things in my life), I was asked to go for an evening drive to the Cliffs with the Reskadinnick cousins. We started after an early tea, the time of day just right for colour; the weather was at its best, heather in full bloom, sea ultramarine laced with emerald, rocks looking defiant as the great breakers tossed their foam over them. As was customary, the wagonette pulled up at Hell's Mouth, our show-piece, so that we might all get out to look down.

Knowing every inch of the ground from my childhood, I ran on ahead of the others, all eager to show our visitor the way to do it. The ritual was to run up to the edge of the cliff and then lie full length, with head over, so as to gaze in safety at the cauldron of raging sea below. Before lying down I turned to hail the others coming up. To my surprise Arthur Hughes was in front of them all, running and looking horribly scared.

'What is the matter?' I asked.

'Oh!' he gasped, 'I thought you were bound to go over—running at the edge like that! I was afraid to shout a warning—it might have startled you.' The expression on his face checked my natural impulse to laugh at his fears. As the others came straggling up he added in a matter-of-fact tone,

'If you had gone over I should have gone after you.' In the moment left to us we looked at one another in silence. We each knew that it was the key-note of our lives—where one went the other would go—to the mouth of hell or elsewhere—it didn't matter.

On the drive back it was convenient for me to be dropped at the foot of the town while the others went on to Reskaldinnick. Automatically I went up Fore Street and took the right turnings to reach uncle Joe's; sheer habit took me, for I had no idea what I was doing. It was a comfort to be among my cheerful cousins, none of whom would notice my disquiet. Amid the hilarious talk around me I tried to concentrate on *Sesame and Lilies*, but it seemed tame and unreal. I was thankful when uncle Joe asked me to have a game of chess. Here silence was respectable, and it pleased my uncle that I was taking so long over my moves. Usually he had been distressed at my impatience with his slowness, for with him chess was more like a Buddhist meditation than a game. This lasted a nice long time, for my random moves put him out of his calculations almost as effectively as any strategy—each one made him suspect a subtle attack, and each piece that I lost he regarded as a gambit. He little imagined that his king was safe enough, for instead of designs on it I had running in my head the line of Bunyan, 'Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven'. Only I was reversing it, for I saw that there was a way to heaven even at hell's mouth.

It may seem strange that I was so flabbergasted. With four brothers and their many friends, with endless love-affairs of cousins and acquaintances, and discussions and speculations about them, surely I must have imagined something of the kind coming my own way? But I hadn't. The mere fact of meeting men of so many different types and finding them capital companions, and taking them quite naturally, must have acted as a kind of barrage, enabling both them and myself to talk without self-consciousness. I remember in particular a friend of Tom's who had fallen desperately in love with one



of my cousins, who would have none of him. He poured out his wretchedness to me in long letters, begging me to write about her to him and do all I could. I entered into the job with great zest, but never supposed that this kind of stuff would come my way.

Anyhow, I managed to keep my feelings to myself, and in two days' time Mr. Hughes had returned to Wales without our having a word together again, and without any one supposing that we might like it. Perhaps mother suspected something. When he called to take a formal farewell, I heard her give him a casual invitation to come to see us in London, and promise to let him know our address when it was fixed. I joined my cousins in seeing him off at the station, where his farewells to them were very warm; but no word did he address to me. I felt flat—desolate. If I had asked mother she could have told me that neglect is sometimes the warmest gesture possible; but I said nothing to her, in spite of our close intimacy and confidence; or is it simply because of the intimacy that a mother has to forgo the deepest confidences?

Well, I had plenty to distract my thoughts. A post had been offered me in Kensington, through the recommendation of Miss Buss. An ardent old North Londoner, a Miss Bennett, was starting a new school, and wanted to run it on the lines of the North London. Much to our satisfaction the post was non-resident, so that mother and I could live together. The address of the school was West Kensington, of which we had never heard. We concluded that it must be even more aristocratic than Kensington, but were soon undeceived on this point. Aunt Lizzie had been very good in finding some rooms for us close to the school. At a turn in North End Road was a large public house called 'The Cedars', and opposite this was a row of good shops. One of these, a greengrocer's, was to be our new home. We didn't have to push through the greens and potatoes, but went up to our first-floor rooms by a private entrance. Mother was perfectly contented wherever you put her down. She always maintained that it was the people you lived with that mattered, and not the place. She at once

admired the spacious sitting-room, and exclaimed, 'Look at the good view we get, in two directions, and with such a lot going on.' What entertained us both, and every one who came to see us, was the wall decoration. Not the usual romantic engravings, but huge oil-paintings in heavy gilt frames. Our landlady had lived in Spain and had brought them back with her, and that seemed to account for them amply. She said they were very old masters. They were certainly obscure from dirt and age, and this was greatly to their advantage, for it lent a mellowness and respectability to scenes that were mostly blood-thirsty or crude in their morality. One was a realistic rendering of something from the story of Susannah and the Elders, and another was the figure of Judith pacing home in quiet triumph, swinging the head of Holofernes, all dripping with blood, as though she had just picked it up cheap in the market, and cared not who knew it.

The scheme of colouring in the furniture was in harmony: carpet a fierce green, tablecloth a yellower green; chairs covered with crimson velvet, and some antimacassars of vermillion; but all were faded sufficiently to provide a quiet gaiety to the room as a whole.

The new school was only at five minutes' distance. Everything in it was beautifully arranged, but for the first few weeks there were only three pupils, so my labours were light. I had time to go on with my work for a degree, and have long tramps with mother. She on her part did a good deal of exploring of the neighbourhood. When I came in to dinner on the second day she said, 'We are in the odour of sanctity here. I have discovered that Burne-Jones has his studio just at the back of us. I saw his name on the door. And our landlady tells me that his famous briar-rose is in the garden.' It was not till later on that we heard the more interesting item about his house—that it was the home of Richardson at one time, and that he wrote *Pamela* there.

As soon as we were settled mother wrote to Mr. Hughes to suggest that he should come up to spend a Sunday with us, and as October 2nd was a Sunday and our common birth-

day, it seemed a good excuse for a little celebration, 'especially as Molly is to be twenty-one'. He replied that he could spend the Saturday night with his old friend Bourne, living in Camberwell, and would come on to us in time for midday dinner, and added that he was to be thirty.

Mother ordered roast fowl and its appurtenances—always a sign of festivity with her. We children used to say that she said grace more fervently over roast fowl than over roast mutton. When it came to the time for starting to church she announced that she was going to sample something fresh, as the church round the corner was so unstimulating; she had a mind to try the Roman Catholic Pro-cathedral; it sounded dignified anyhow. 'You can stop at home, dear, to receive Mr. Hughes; I've been in the oven myself.' This was a reference to an old story about a girl who had disappeared; she could nowhere be found until a neighbour came in and suggested looking in the big brick oven; and there she was. When the neighbour was asked how she had guessed the hiding-place she said, 'I've been in the oven myself'.

So I was left at home alone, to await his arrival. A long time passed, and the usual Sunday-morning lethargy was pervading North End Road. I gave up looking out of the window, for the traffic was hardly more than an occasional milk cart. I tried to read, but the words made no impression on my brain. Then I began to think that he had been unable to come after all . . . or that he had found his friend Bourne too engrossing . . . or that he had changed his mind and preferred to keep away . . . or that he had met with an accident. . . . It was past twelve, and soon the landlady would be bustling in to lay the cloth for dinner, and then mother would be returning. I was just thinking that I didn't care what happened if only something would happen, when I heard a hansom draw up outside. 'It isn't at our door,' I said to myself. 'Just go on with your book.' In another minute there were steps on the stairs, the door was thrown open, and the landlady announced 'Mr. Hughes'. If she was listening at the door after closing it she must have been disappointed and no doubt surprised, for it was some time

before a word was said. He stalked in, threw his hat down, took me in his arms and kissed me as if it were the natural salute.

It may be hard to believe (my three sons have difficulty in doing so), but this was the first kiss, other than fraternal, that I had ever experienced from a man of my own age. Perhaps I had missed a lot of enjoyment, but no amount of it could possibly have equalled the satisfaction of that first one. A bit unnerved, I felt that the silence must be broken somehow, and by something matter-of-fact. 'Won't you take your overcoat off?' I managed to say. No reply. Then I heard myself saying, 'Will it take off?' Even this absurdity did not strike either of us at the moment, and mother returned while we were still standing bemused.

Dinner time passed off quite gaily, for mother gallantly described her peculiar experiences at the Pro-cathedral with great gusto, and when we sat round the fire afterwards we were all talking naturally enough. We laughed over Arthur's attempts to see more of me in Cornwall. He had been so kindly entertained that he hadn't had a minute to himself, let alone a chance to walk up to Camborne. To get such a chance one day he announced that he had to send a telegram, and must go up to Camborne at once about it. Immediately a kindly cousin had offered to take it, as he was then going up to the town himself, and Arthur had been obliged to lay out a shilling on telling his mother that all was going well. Mother was merely amused at our difficulties in seeing one another. 'Those little obstacles', said she, 'merely enhance the pleasure of your meeting. One kiss behind the door is worth ten in front of it.' But, as Arthur pointed out, we hadn't managed to get even the stolen one. She was as enthusiastic about everything as we could wish, and with her unerring instinct for saying the right thing she announced firmly:

'You poor fools! You fancy yourselves in love with one another! Wait till ten years have passed, and then you will see how paltry this will seem compared to your love for one another *then*.'

That was the stuff to give us. Thus cheered, Arthur came to the main thing on his mind.

'You know, Mrs. Thomas, I'm a poor man, and my friends tell me I shall never be a rich one. I don't know why.'

'I know why,' she rejoined quickly, 'and I may tell you this, that Molly would be simply wasted on a rich man. She and I have reduced "doing without" to a science, haven't we, Molly?'

'Oh, rather! I can always make a shilling do the work of eighteenpence; and it would be flying in the face of providence for me to have to bury this talent.'

'You'll have to keep an eye on her, though,' said mother, laughing, 'for she is apt to go to the High Street to buy a pair of gloves, and come back with a new book and the old gloves.'

'That's me, too,' said Arthur, and then hurriedly plunged into his prospects. He was getting a good amount at present, but he had to help his mother, and was sparing all he could for his young brother, who was going through an expensive time in taking his medical training in Edinburgh. 'I took mathematics at Cambridge, but I'm sick of teaching it, and hate schoolmastering. I'm reading for the Bar—that's where my real interest lies, but it will be sometime before I can make a decent income at it. Will Molly wait?'

At this point I didn't stop for mother to reply, but broke in, 'Oh, I'm like Traddles's Sophie. She was willing to wait till she was sixty, or was it seventy?'

We all three laughed, and to smooth over the situation I fetched *David Copperfield* to see which age she had fixed as her limit. Dickens is the worst author in the world to find anything in, and a prolonged hunt for what didn't matter was just the thing to lead us away from an awkward topic. If we had known then that we were to wait ten years before we could be married we might not have been so light-hearted about it. But it would have made no difference, however long the wait. It was many years later that he said to me, 'If we were separated I could wait for you for a thousand years on the chance of getting you at the end.'

Before leaving that evening he left us a kind of legacy in

the shape of his friend Bourne, who (so he asserted) would enjoy coming over for a chat now and again. 'Enjoy' was hardly the right word, for Bourne surely dreaded the ordeal. I can imagine how he muttered to himself, 'A mother and daughter . . . and poor Hughes let in . . . I suppose I must do my best for him and go over to see them . . . the sooner I get it over the better.' Whatever his motive, he came very soon, and often. A man more stiff with learning I have never met, stiff in the sense of sheer amount, not stiff in the use of it, or in ability to make others enjoy it with him. He was very tall and impressive, and a little alarming to me at first. But not so to mother, who could always smell a suppressed challenge and rise to the occasion with joy. His excessive courtesy towards women concealed his complete contempt for their minds, but mother took him unawares, and his first visit had hardly lasted a few minutes before she and he were laughing and sparkling with anecdote and argument. She had won, for he was dragged into forgetting that she was a woman and letting his natural self expand. He ventured his touchstone upon us: he announced that his chief aim in life was *to make one thought grow where two thoughts grew before*. He was accustomed to get much sardonic amusement out of the usual reply to this—'Oh yes, of course, Mr. Bourne!' from people who supposed he meant the platitudinous opposite. So when mother and I burst out with a startled and delighted 'Good!' we were friends indeed.

He told us a good deal about Arthur, and his struggles to help his mother and brother, and indeed any lame dog he met, finishing with the remark, 'You know, Mrs. Thomas, I don't think Hughes will ever be even decently well off.' To this mother replied, 'True, but then, you see, he is a nobleman.' To her, indeed, he seemed all that one could desire for a son-in-law, and he always remained as dear to her as one of her own sons, and no marriage of mine, however exalted, could have satisfied her as much. My happiness was too deep for me to talk about it, but she and I understood one another without words. One can't blink the fact that healthy children are bound to neglect their parents' feelings, and be callously uncommuni-

cative; therefore one of my most pleasing memories is the look on her face when I handed her my first love-letter, with the words, 'Would you like to read it, mother?' 'Do you really mean it?' she said in astonishment. She must have known how much it cost me to do this, and she took it as though it was a sacrament she was receiving. So it was—a kind of benison on all the restraint, absence of persuasion or interference, absence of all inquisitiveness, that she had maintained towards her only daughter. Our slight awkwardness over sharing the letter was relieved by the laughter we got from one passage in it: 'I had to tell all the men last night. Hutchinson who had gone to bed I woke up and I raved to him until he said *he* would have to love some woman.'

Unlike Arthur, I wanted to keep quiet about it; but Tony and my brothers had to be informed. Arthur had come to appreciate something of Tony's character while he was staying in Cornwall, and I had told him of her love-story. He chanced to come across some lines that seemed to him an apt description of her, and wrote them out for me. These I sent her, along with my good news.

*Through this dim, sorry world, where some men hold  
We fight with shadows for a cause unknown,  
You move serene and confident; as gay  
As if Life were a festival; your ease  
Deferred, and others' pleasure all your care.*

*Yet they that know you best call you most dear  
Not for your hundred charms, your mirth, your wit,  
But for the hidden strength which these adorn,  
And that unflinching temper of the soul  
That in the hour of darkness has not failed.*

*For each of all your days, when read aright,  
Is like some ancient missal's flaming page,  
Bordered with garlands, roses, fantasies,  
Writ in the midst with precepts of the Law.*

Her letter in reply made no reference to these lines, but ran thus: 'Your news is no news to me, dear. I can see a church by daylight. There's no mistaking a man in love. Arthur is one of the best men in the world, and there's no hardship in having to wait.'

The reactions of my brothers were also characteristic. Dym had taken a liking to Arthur immediately, and was hearty in his congratulations. 'He's a good sort, dear—I found that out on our fishing talks at Bedford; and if he does play the fiddle, well, a man must have a fault or two.' But Tom was too astonished to be decently polite. 'Well, I'm blowed! Fancy our little Molly engaged to be married! It's impossible. Nell and I can't take it in. You say that this Arthur Hughes is a Cambridge honours man, and I have always said that if Molly ever should be married (in the remote future) it would be to a fool.'

Except for these few necessary *lettres de faire part* I hugged my happiness to myself. But mother and I had to celebrate somehow. Stationed at our corner opposite 'The Cedars' was a very old crossing-sweeper. Mother liked to watch him because he reminded her of the old man who used to sit at our corner at Canonbury and make friends with us children. As I turned out of North End Road each morning he would give an extra dash with his broom, and I would give him a smile and occasionally a penny. During the week following our great birthday Mother and I gathered together four half-crowns and wrapped them in a bit of paper. As I passed the old man on my way to the school as usual I thrust the packet into his hand with a muttered 'special occasion'. I looked back after a yard or two and saw the old chap, with his hat raised to heaven, calling down blessings on my head. Sometimes it looks as if blessings really 'took'. Mother had been watching from her window, and observed that the crossing was neglected for a while, and 'The Cedars' was one customer up, 'but', she added as she described it to me at dinner-time, 'who shall blame him?'

It chanced that on the Saturday of that same week I went to



spend the day in Camden Road with Mary Wood. As it was the first time we had met since our holiday at Sandsend, there was a great deal to tell that hadn't been fully dealt with in our letters. I made her laugh about our meals in Darlington, about my cousins' love-affairs in Cornwall, and about our rooms over the greengrocer's shop, but Arthur I never even mentioned. She had much to tell me about our old friends at school and so on. There seemed no moment when I could break in with, 'Oh, by the way, I'm engaged to be married'.

I blurted out my news in a letter immediately after my visit, and I don't think she ever quite forgave me. It was some time before we had a chance to meet again, and by then her fury had blown over, and she listened to my explanation of how hard it was to talk about a thing one felt deeply.

'Do tell me what it's like to be in love!' said she. 'I have read a lot about it in novels, but you can tell me more exactly what it's really *like*.' I laughed a denial.

'There's one thing I can tell you at once that it is *not* like. There is no adoration in it. The idea that love is blind is all nonsense—it's most clear-eyed—you know that the man is the one companion for you through life, no matter his follies or failings or crimes.' (It is only recently that I have come across a description that would have suited my book had I known it then. Love, this modern author asserts, is a single experience in life; it is the supreme acceptance of one personality by another, without any condition or approval or other consideration whatever.) As it was, I ended lamely by telling Mary that she would know all about it when it happened to her; for how was I to express to her, or to any one, that rush of experience that overcame me at Hell's Mouth?

Mary went to her shelf and took down her Ovid. 'How do you like these lines?

*Te loquor absentem, te vox mea nominat unam,  
Nulla venit sine te nox mihi, nulla dies.'*

I fastened on to them at once, and printed them (with *unam* changed to *unum*) and sent them to Arthur.

afterwards we used the non-committal words *nulla venit* as a secret pass-word at any time.

By some blessed Dispensation of the Law, as inscrutable as providence, Gray's Inn required Arthur to dine there twice every fortnight. He used to get off on Saturday afternoon, eat one dinner, spend the night and Sunday morning at North End Road, and eat the second dinner before returning to Bedford. In order to have as long time with him as possible, I used to meet him at St. Pancras, and we would often do a picture gallery, or the like, before joining mother at tea.

Time never hung heavy between these visits. Mother was continually discovering fresh interests in the neighbourhood, and new walks into 'almost country'. Friends and relations, mostly Cornish, were pretty frequent, and we could always have a spare room to put any one up. The mere fact of our living 'over a shop' was an attraction in itself, and Mary Wood was not the only one to be disappointed at not having to 'wade through onions to a throne', as she expressed it. One fairly constant visitor was the oddest man I have ever met. John Lloyd, the brother-in-law of my young aunt Fanny, and therefore a quasi-uncle, was small and insignificant in every way, even in dress; and yet he was very rich. His position was that of secretary to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, and his office was somewhere in the City. He was a bachelor, and the word must have cried out for the epithet 'confirmed' from his youthful days. His life was engrossed in his three hobbies. The first was his secretarial work, and I call it a hobby because he would go to his office on every Bank holiday, Good Friday, and Christmas Day. On mother's expressing astonishment at this he said, 'You see, I can get on so much better in the quiet, with all the young clerks out of the way.' Another hobby was his knowledge of London. It was like throwing a bone to a dog to ask him how to get from one point to another. Out would come pencil and paper and there was a map of the best route before you knew where you were. This amused mother and me so much that I was guilty of thinking up fancy spots for him to connect. I had him gravelled once for a minute or

two, dealing with the route for a poor old lady, who couldn't afford a cab, with an invalid brother she wished to visit; she lived in Penge, and her brother in Hornsey Rise. John Lloyd's own home, for as long as I ever heard of him, was the Euston Hotel—of course a good central position for studying the vagaries of the old town. It may well be wondered why he came out to see us in West Kensington; he always took a kindly interest in Barnholt, for whom he had found a place in his Company, and liked to have any news of him from us; but I think it was his third hobby that really drew him. He solved the acrostics in *Vanity Fair* (if I remember the paper aright). As soon as he had had a cup of tea, discussed the weather, and asked after Barnholt, he would begin, 'By the way' and draw from his pocket a cutting from a newspaper with the acrostic. I was of peculiar use to him in this direction, for my education had been superficial and I knew through my brothers a little bit of everything. Moreover, as he pointed out, ladies' minds aren't rational and logical, and that's just what one wants for an acrostic. I think he wished after he had spoken that he had refrained from stating this undeniable truth, for our mirth over it was a little too hearty.

On one of his visits we had news for him. Barnholt was coming home for a short holiday. Good luck seemed to rain on us, for a glimpse of Barnholt was quite literally a rare treat. His letters were laughably laconic. Here is one that I happen to have kept:

*Dear mother, I hope you are all right. We are just making Iquique. Give my love to little Molly. Your loving son Barnholt.*

But his presence was another matter, for he was the prime favourite with each of us, and we all rallied round. Of course he was to stay at North End Road, but Dym met him at Plymouth to bring him on. Tom came from Middlesbrough for a few days, and Arthur put in a short visit before going to Wales for Christmas. Those whom we couldn't accommodate put up at 'The Cedars'. Barnholt was hugely tickled at the greengrocer's shop, and greatly appreciated the variety of

vegetables which our landlady served up every day as 'surprises' for us. One evening was specially gay, when Mr. Bourne joined us and contributed his subacid wit to the conversation. The feast itself was simple, 'on a bottled beer footing', but at the close mother unveiled a bottle of special sloe-gin that had come from Tony. Barnholt had been pouring forth the most exciting yarns, with the straightest face, and extreme economy of words. The sloe-gin reminded him of a man he met in an hotel in Valparaiso, who was talking very big about taste in wines. 'I'm glad to meet you,' said Barnholt, 'for I happen to have in my possession three bottles of a rare liqueur, of extremely delicate flavour, too good for ordinary people, really crying out for a man like you to taste it. I obtained it (don't ask me how) from the cellars of the King of Spain. If you like I'll go up to my room and bring you a specimen to try.' The man was interested, and proclaimed the pure water that Barnholt brought to him in a liqueur glass to be of the most delicate bouquet he had ever come across. He offered large money for the three bottles, or even for one, but nothing would induce Barnholt to part with them.

'That's right, Barney,' was Tom's comment, 'a true humorist never spoils his joke by telling a man how he has been fooled.'

Barnholt was as pleased with Arthur as the others were, but told me that he thought it was all nonsense for me to go on working for a degree.

'You see, Barney,' said I, 'we can't be married for some time, and to go on working at something hard is just the best thing for me, and really it's rather fun.'

'Right. But don't work too hard. Learn to knock off properly when you do knock off. Some people don't know how to be lazy. It's an art.'

*My Second Post*

IN spite of Barnholt's good advice about taking things easy I found it difficult to get any time at all for relaxation during the term. Our care-free life over the greengrocer's came to an end. Pupils poured into the school, and one or two wanted to be boarders. So a house was taken in one of the many respectable roads of West Kensington, some one was found to run it, and the two first boarders were accommodated. To make the venture pay its way mother and I were asked to live there too. Of course mother heartily consented; but how we did regret our move! The road of houses all alike, with pillared decorations of a standard pattern, was a poor exchange for our bustling corner by 'The Cedars'. The lady superintendent was all too ladylike and refined, and from her we had to endure emotional prayers every morning. The presence of herself and the boarders deprived every mealtime of its salutary merriment, so that mother and I had to confine our folly to our walks together. And these were none too many, for in addition to the increased work at school I was making fierce attempts to get through my reading for a degree. In this matter mother was my great stand-by. She read the French and English books, and discussed them. Her pleasure in the character of Falconbridge went beyond the bounds of propriety; for she liked to quote some of the more robust bits at table, shock our presiding lady, and then add very gently that it was Shakespeare. She took a lot of trouble to 'hear' me the lists of names and facts and dates from Roman History that I hung over the washing-stand, but she had a hearty contempt for my troubling to learn them. 'Why bother to know anything' she would say, 'when your neighbour is always able and even desirous to tell you?' But, as I pointed out to her, they don't encourage this method in examination-rooms.

On looking back I can't imagine how I contrived to do all the work, without proper time for it, without any tutoring, and often without even an annotated text. I was completely beaten once by a passage in a speech of Cicero's. Remembering the remark of some tough old teacher of Classics that one can construe through a brick wall, I steadily pinned down all the visible verbs, fitted cases and genders, and yet no sense would emerge. For over an hour one evening I set my teeth into it with a dogged obstinacy, but had to put it away in despair. At the next available hour of freedom I took a bus to the South Kensington Museum, where I knew there was a reference library. I asked the young man for an annotated text of the oration, retired to a desk, and hunted up the passage, saying to myself that the editor would probably have followed the example of most of his tribe by blandly shutting his eyes to a real difficulty while calling attention to some harmless little subjunctive in its neighbourhood. No, he had had the honesty to say, 'This passage is so obscure that the text is obviously incomplete'. Although I couldn't afford to buy that thrice-blessed edition, it was worth the twopenny bus-ride to be able to stake down at least one chapter that no examiner would have the heart to set.

Another thing we missed badly in our refined home was the casual dropping-in of visitors—Mr. Bourne, John Lloyd, Mary Wood, and our numerous Cornish cousins. However, I always had the fortnightly joy of seeing Arthur. Once I met him at St. Pancras in pouring rain, and wrote a description to Tony of our afternoon struggling through the streets to the National Gallery, our favourite resort. Her reply was, 'How delightful to go to meet the man you love, especially when it's raining and you've no money to spend.'

I needed these bright spots, for the work at school was robbed of its natural pleasure by the fidgets of the headmistress. The pupils were for the most part of the best type one could desire, but Miss Bennett's standard was too high. Her ideal was ladylike efficiency combined with the rigid discipline of the North London. But she had none of the awe-inspiring

attributes of Miss Buss, nor the slightest sense of humour to balance the deficiency. Her working scheme was that I should be the martinet, and she the popular dispenser of smiles. Hence if anything went wrong she blamed me. Now things are bound to go wrong sometimes, however ladylike girls may be, and however elevated their home circle. If healthy, they must be noisy sometimes in their playtime, and some of them will be sure to do an unladylike thing. A bland and solemn girl of fifteen, of Spanish blood, appeared so often with a note from her mother asking leave of absence that Miss Bennett felt she ought to call and remonstrate. To her shocked surprise it turned out that the mother knew nothing of these letters, and was hardly distressed at having to admit that they must have been all written by the girl herself. Miss Bennett comforted herself with the reflection that the people were more or less 'foreign'.

Her religious principles and ideals of conduct were really exalted; and I think when this is the case the ideals themselves have the effect of works of supererogation, so that the holders of them can afford to do little acts of deception of which less exalted natures would be ashamed. For instance, Miss Bennett herself told me that in taking a French translation lesson she had spied a word coming that she didn't know. So she glanced at the clock and suddenly exclaimed to the class, 'Oh, I forgot, I have to send off a message; just go on with your work; I'll be back in a minute.' Whereupon she slipped into her study, looked up the word, and returned. This was retailed by her to me as a slick way of getting out of a hole.

Again, one day my classroom door was opened and I was requested to come outside. 'Down in the drawing-room,' began Miss Bennett hurriedly, 'there's a girl of fifteen with her mother who wants her to be prepared for matriculation. She appears to have done some Latin and Mechanics. I've tested her Latin, and it's fairly good; and now I've said that my assistant will test her Mechanics, since it's not my subject. So please go down at once and examine her in it.'

'But I'm a blank on it. I haven't touched it since I went in for matriculation myself. . . . I simply can't.'

'I am afraid I must request you to do as I say. The girl is waiting for you. I will take your class.'

I have seldom thought so hard as I did on those stairs. 'Thought' is not the right word, though, for all I could do was to try to recall something of my old school text-book—a small green one, by some one named Magnus. All I could visualize were some sentences in italics—Newton's Laws of Motion. I believed there were three, but the only one that had stuck was the first. This had remained for the simple reason that I had always doubted it—for how could Newton be sure that a thing would go on for ever if you let it alone? Then a blessed reflection came upon me, that I need only ask questions, there was no need to answer them, and sauntering into the study, I said, 'Good morning', sat down, and began benignly:

'So you have done some Mechanics, I understand?' Then in answer to her diffident 'A very little', I went on, 'Let's see how far you have gone. You can give me Newton's Laws of Motion, of course?'

She began glibly with the first, and my heart sank. What if she rattled them all off? What should I ask next? But like myself she had gone aground after the first, and while she was hunting in her mind, the blessed word 'lever' hopped into my memory.

'Never mind,' said I, 'don't worry. We'll drop that. Tell me now, what different kinds of levers are there?'

Here her confusion was still worse, and much to her relief and my own I was able to suggest that she would have to revise the subject from the beginning. I went upstairs to report my conclusion, without dwelling on my method of obtaining it. I have played the humbug in life often enough, heaven knows, but never with such abject shame as I felt that day.

Naturally, after this, our staff had to be stiffened on the mathematical side, and the new assistant, to my immense comfort, was endowed with humour as well as with mathematics. Her name was Williamson, and (as I heard in later years) the



staff became at once known to the girls as 'Benny, Tommy, and Willy'. And there was another way in which Willy was a comfort to me. She shared the blame when things went wrong, and these things were sometimes so small as hardly to be visible to the naked eye. We would be hauled over the coals for not taking off a mark if a girl had omitted to put a full stop at the end of a sentence. The slightest blemish on a desk had to be notified. Every Friday afternoon there was a grand cleaning of the desks by the pupils with little bowls of water, sponges, and towels. For every stain detected after this process the culprit had to put a penny in the missionary box. This last touch was discontinued after the rebellion of one of the senior girls.

'I don't mind,' said she, 'being fined for ink-blots on my desk, but I do object to having little niggers converted with the proceeds.'

This smacked of profanity to Miss Bennett, who was deeply religious, and I think she must have been shocked at the amusement it afforded to Miss Williamson and me. For she invited us both to tea with her on the following Sunday, when conversation almost naturally turned to 'What church do you attend?' and thence to religious views. We soon found ourselves involved in 'baptismal regeneration'. While I looked profound and stared at the tablecloth, poor Willy was blurting out her disbelief in the eternal loss of a child who hadn't been sprinkled with water. The party broke up with some tenseness of feeling. On the way home:

'Do you believe all that about baptism?' asked Willy.

'Heavens! No!'

'Then why didn't you say so?'

'What on earth is the use of arguing with some one whose mind is closed?'

We then found that we had a good many more daring views in common, and were thenceforth fast friends. She was not only an alleviator of school fidgets, but also an asset to mother and me in the boarding-house, where she egged mother on to demoralize meal-times.

'Mending stockings!' exclaimed mother one day, when this

duty was being over-pressed on the boarders. 'For my part I'm like a Beau Brummell, who would never have any garment mended. "A tear or a hole," he used to say, "may be the accident of the moment; but a *mend* is premeditated poverty."' Her remarks on school affairs, however, were never made in the presence of the boarders, but were reserved for Willy and me after they had gone to bed. She thought that all the nonsense about 'interesting' pupils was overdone. 'If they don't care to work, I shouldn't begin to woo them by being amusing, but give them something really dull, like dictation. Interesting stuff ought to be the reward of good work.'

This particular talk was in connexion with the failure of a young assistant teacher who had been engaged to help with our increasing numbers. She was fresh from the Training College, and full of ideas and talk about giving 'interesting lessons'. One day she had prepared an elaborate demonstration of the cause of day and night; not for the little ones but for the elder girls who already knew as much about it as she did. She lit a candle, and swung a potato from a string round it, to represent the earth's movements. It became a little complicated and required so much explanation that no notice was taken of our school Touchstone, who was waving her hand in the back row all the time. At last she was observed and asked what her difficulty was. 'How many times,' said she, 'must the potato go round before it gets roasted?' The poor young teacher, instead of enjoying the joke, or seeing an alluring astronomical speculation, burst into tears.

Another importation that lasted only a short while was a French mistress. Her accent, of course, was all that could be desired, but was hopelessly unintelligible to those English girls, for the glad days of the direct method were then unknown. In fact the school seemed to get on better with only Benny, Tommy, and Willy to do the teaching. If only we had been free from fidgets! I was severely reprimanded by Miss Bennett for lending *Vanity Fair* to one of the elder girls who was hopelessly incapable of the usual school subjects, and whose home reading I had discovered to be sentimental

tosh. Thackeray would be 'dangerous' for her. I never could guess which episode in Becky's career would have led that great stupid pupil into the path of sin. But any least breath of the opposite sex was to be guarded against, with some rather ridiculous results. Several brothers of the pupils went to St. Paul's School, and used to meet their sisters in the road. Occasionally they fell in with somebody else's sister. Miss Bennett took alarm, and insisted on my being stationed in a first-floor window, every day before and after school, to scan the road and report to her *all* I saw. Needless to say I saw nothing, but I shall never cease to be grateful to the elder pupils who let me see how they sympathized with me in my dreadful job.

One morning after prayers the assembled school sustained a shock of joyful surprise. Miss Bennett in her most solemn tones announced that she had found a letter lying about, containing these most disturbing words: 'Darling Edwin, you are ever in my thoughts', followed by further foolish expressions of a similar nature, which she 'preferred not to read'. After a sweeping glance over the whole school, she said, 'I am afraid I must insist on knowing who this boy is. . . . *Who* is Edwin?' All eyes turned to the most daring pupil, but she was obviously as much puzzled as any one. The question was then repeated in still more impressive tones. A row of tiny juniors were right in front, and from this there was raised a little hand and a piping voice, 'It's me'. Even Miss Bennett was obliged to smile. Two little girls had played at being Edwin and Angelina and had spent spare moments in writing love letters.

For our little community such a mystery was a pleasing interlude in the work. Miss Bennett was a capital headmistress in the latitude she gave for experiments in teaching and in the warm acknowledgement of successful results. Miss Williamson and I enjoyed our struggles with the few dull pupils and the rapid advance made by a few girls of exceptional ability. It was only just now and again that Miss Bennett's passion for perfection passed the bounds of moderation. Such an occasion was the Prize Day, involving an entertainment for

parents. These displays ought to be put down by law, for they foster evil thoughts in all who have to do with them. If each form were allowed to spring a surprise item on the audience, it might be fun. In our case the over-preparation killed any pleasure there might have been in the poetry recited. Some Elizabethan schoolmistress must have asked Shakespeare to write a play that would do for her prize day—to have plenty of useful history, nice long speeches, and not too much love interest. And he responded with *Richard II*. Fortunately Miss Bennett undertook the serious business of drilling the elder girls in this, while to me fell the humbler duty of getting a class of thirty to put some life into reciting *The Schooner Hesperus* in unison. One girl would insist that it *was* the schooner Hesperus. I told her that I never said it wasn't, but that had no effect on her, and the devastatingly silly poem was dinned in my ears day after day, when even arithmetic would have been more exhilarating for us all. Of course, on the day of the actual performance the children made all the mistakes they had been trained to avoid, but nobody paid the least attention to anything but clothes and prizes.

It was not only the recitations that consumed so much time. The big room had to be arranged to accommodate the parents, visitors, and pupils, with due regard to their respective importance. Miss Williamson and I had to stay on after school hours, while Miss Bennett kept changing her mind as to which end the platform should be, in what order the pupils should come up for their prizes, where the piano should be placed, and endless smaller details. Mother was greatly amused at all this, and said that Miss Bennett was like 'Old Jasper' in the *Bab Ballads*, with the 'mystic selvagee', the 'swiftening in', and 'turning deadeyes up'. Indeed, the parallel was fairly close, for as Rodney was to the captain in the poem, so was Miss Buss to Miss Bennett. 'What would Miss Buss have done?' was her constant criterion, and 'How shocked Miss Buss would have been!' her most serious reproof. Another literary parallel occurred to us and we fetched out *Uncle Remus*, to read once again about Brer Rabbit in the sapling—'he feared he gwineter

fall, en he feared he wer'n't gwineter fall'. That's just like Miss Bennett, we agreed; yesterday she was afraid that the number of visitors would be too few for the big room, and to-day she was afraid they would be too many. When on the following day she met us with, 'I think after all the piano had better be on the other side' we had to hide our laughter behind the piano as we shifted it for the fourth time.

For the girls the holidays began after the prize-giving, but for us there remained the Reports. Let no parent think that these are thrown off with careless ease. We had several meetings for them, in order to discuss every turn of phrase. Miss Williamson was far too straightforward in her remarks, and was therefore asked to write them in faint pencil, in case they should need toning down. Our English had to be above reproach, and the expression, 'she must try and improve her spelling' was changed to, 'she must try *to* improve her spelling'. We were warned to avoid metaphor and literary allusions. Miss Bennett told us that she had once written of a stupid girl, 'She is not possessed of all the ten talents', and the mother wrote to ask why *ten* talents were required. We racked our brains for fresh epithets to decorate the deserving, and for synonyms for 'bone lazy' and 'naturally deficient'. Our star pupils who positively never erred, such as Ethel Strudwick and Edith Calkin, gave us so much trouble to praise sufficiently without seeming fulsome, that we were positively grateful to Violet Gask, another champion, of whom we could always say that her writing needed care. When all the spaces had been filled and Miss Williamson's remarks finally adjusted and inked in, Miss Bennett signed them, while Miss Williamson stood by with blotting-paper and I addressed the envelopes. We then offered to post them on our way home, feeling safe from any alterations when once they were slipped into the box. Then at last our holidays began.

Mother and I knew all about our trains for Cornwall, but Miss Williamson lived on a more tricky railway, with all its affairs squeezed into half a page of Bradshaw. But she said that when once she reached Cumberland she knew every inch

of the way to her home at Maryport. Her part of England was as remote as Cornwall, and we enjoyed comparing notes on the talk and intonation of the country people. There was a porter whose voice she loved to hear as he sang out, 'Spiátry loop oot—Spiátry loop oot', which conveyed well enough to the people of the district, 'Change here for Aspatría'. And there was an old farmer she knew who used to say of his glass of port that he liked to feel it 'splashing from rib to rib'. He was a lover of the Turf as well as of wine, and would say to any one in the dumps, 'Don't make Despair first favourite—'edge a bit on 'Ope'.

We started off in high spirits to our wild regions, far north and far west, promising to bring back more stories from Cornwall and Cumberland. I little guessed that I was to explore a far more outlandish part of Britain than either.

## XI

### *My New People, 1888*

#### § 1

WE had been only a short time in Cornwall, enjoying ourselves as usual with riding and picnics and tennis with my brother Dym and our cousins, when there came an invitation for me to spend the rest of my holiday in Wales. Arthur had told me of his home in a remote Welsh valley, a house called Fronwen that his father had built when he was married, and where he and his three brothers had been brought up. Unfortunately his father had not realized that the actual land on which he built the house was not his, and that anything built on it belonged legally to the landlord; it was therefore a great blow to his widow to find herself, a few years after his death, turned out of her home without the slightest compensation. Indeed it was brutally sudden, for Arthur knew nothing of it when I had seen him last in Kensington. His letters told me that he had hurried to Wales as soon as his term was over, in order to find a new house for his mother and to help her move her furniture. He had settled her in Aberdovey, and everything was still in rather a muddle, but at least there was a spare room ready, and I was begged to come and help put things straight.

Mother and Tony and Dym all insisted that I should write and accept the invitation, and I needed no pressing. Although perfect from my schooldays in the counties and chief towns of Wales, I knew nothing of its intimate features except a few Welsh words my father had taught me, and his remark that 'it's always raining cats and dogs in Wales'. Being a tiny child I had pictured these animals hurtling through the air, and conceived a distaste for the country.

The Irishman's saying, 'You can't get to Armagh from here' began to seem more sensible when Dym and I tried to

plan out the route from Camborne to Aberdovey. As the crow flies, easy, but as the trains went, no. Reskadinnick could produce no Bradshaw issued in historical times. 'Never mind, Dym,' said I, 'it'll be fun just to push along; I'll be sure to get there some day.' He advised starting by the night mail, so as to get into Wales by daylight on the following day, and not be involved in Welsh local lines when it was dusk or dark. The mail didn't deign to stop at Camborne, so I had to take a slow train to Redruth. Mother went with me so far, and we were full of grumbles about it, not on account of the extra trouble, but because of the age-long jealousy between the two towns. The idea that the Great Western should pass Camborne and stop at Redruth! This grievance kept our tongues busy and away from my real trouble—the dread of having to meet my new relations, especially a future mother-in-law.

'Don't you mind anything, darling,' was mother's parting injunction on Redruth platform, as the mail fussed in. 'You will be all right. Arthur's mother *must* be splendid. Mind you help her all you can, and remember the girl-guest's rule, never to stay up for a moment after your hostess has gone to bed.'

I settled down comfortably for the certainly uninterrupted run to Bristol, and was therefore annoyed to hear the cry 'all change' when we reached Plymouth. For some reason the last few coaches were to be taken off and we passengers in them had to get out and push in ahead wherever we could. Dym had advised me to travel light, in order to avoid worrying about heavy luggage at the junctions. So I had put everything into a bag that I could carry. A cheery sea-captain took this from me and made room for me in the already crowded carriage that I approached. When we had gone a little way he took out some apples, and that reminded me that I was hungry, and might as well have a bit of supper out of the basket of provisions that Tony had made up for me. Among the really bitter moments of life I reckon that one, lingering in the memory when weightier sorrows are decently forgotten. I had



left my parcel on the rack in the other carriage. In my look of disappointment I must have betrayed what had happened, for that ever-blessed captain gave me an apple.

On learning at Bristol that it would be two hours before the Midland train came in, I settled down to read the only light literature I had brought—a sixpenny edition, in small print, of a highly recommended book, which I hoped would be as good as *Jane Eyre*. But a gaunt and empty waiting-room, with no refreshments to be had, round about midnight, was not the best milieu for attacking *Wuthering Heights*. Or perhaps it was, for the steady application to find out who was who, and the hope that surely the next chapter would bring some cheerful happening, helped me to pass the time until my train came in. I was instructed to change at Birmingham, and having ascertained from my fellow passengers that I was not likely to run through Birmingham without knowing it, I stilled the cravings of hunger as a dog does, by going off to sleep.

Birmingham turned out to be larger and more desolate than Bristol. For all its many platforms there was only one miserable little waiting-room open, and that very stuffy, and occupied by two sleeping women. If Mrs. Elton thought there was something direful in the sound of Birmingham, I certainly thought there was something direful in the sight of it. Walking up and down and pretending to be an explorer in Africa, I came across a genial-looking porter.

‘Any chance of a cup of tea anywhere?’ I asked him.

‘Not till 8 o’clock, Missy, refreshment room’s shut up.’ Then seeing my look of distress he added, ‘But if you come along of me, I’ll get you a cup.’

I went ‘along of him’, and we reached a little shanty in a backwater of the vast station. It was like those alluring coffee stalls tucked away in odd corners of London. A man was dispensing tea to porters on their way to and from work. For a penny I was given a cup of steaming elixir, with a biscuit in the saucer. The cup was so thick that my lips could hardly get round it, and the tea slopped over and soaked the biscuit.

But it was the greatest value for money I have ever obtained. Indeed, I felt as if I ought to pour it out as a libation, as David did the cup of water.

This happy venture passed the time too, and gave me strength to walk about again and read the advertisements. It was daylight when my next train came in, and as it was nearly empty I had no fellow passengers to consult, so determined to watch for Shrewsbury all the way, in case I passed it. But I fell fast asleep, only to wake as we were gliding into another big station. Shrewsbury! Hurrah! Food was my one thought, and it was not till I had fallen upon a pork pie and hot coffee that I asked about the next train for Aberdovey. There was to be one about 10, and that was convenient, since it was then only 8. But when I found on further inquiries that it was to arrive at Aberdovey at 2, I changed my mind. To face new people is bad enough at any hour, but at 2 o'clock in the afternoon it is hideous. I pictured a lunch just cleared away, and either a dreadful attempt to warm some up for me, or else a long stretch of being polite before tea would be possible. No. Finding that the next train would not start till 2, I actually decided to spend the six hours in Shrewsbury to wait for it, little knowing that the Cambrian railway could have been relied on to be an hour late, if I had chosen the earlier train. The station people must have thought me a suspicious character, or suffering from some nervous complaint, for I kept returning to its purlieu after each little prowling round the town. My chief interest was Tom's school. But I found that the old building of his day had been turned into a public library or something equally impersonal, and that the new buildings were away on the other side of the town by the river. I went to see them and they looked all beautiful, but had no associations with my brother, so I returned to the old building, and tried to pick out which window might have been that of his old prep-room. For this had been the scene of two of his school-boy pranks that had specially delighted me as a child. One was the putting of an alarm-clock in the master's desk, arranged to go off during the deep quiet of prep-time, and the other

was the simultaneous tearing of brown paper at the third stroke of 7 by all the boys in study.

After this I merely wandered about the town, enjoying the little up-and-down streets with funny names (such as Wyle Cop and Dogpole), the old timbered houses, and the country women in their poke-bonnets and plaid shawls. Then I fell back on the Londoner's unfailing source of amusement—looking at the shop windows. Returning to my base, the station waiting-room, I wrote a letter to mother, and went out again to find the post office to buy a stamp. After this I had another determined go at *Wuthering Heights*. But the characters seemed to have become more complicated and even less exhilarating than the night before, so I went to the book-stall to look for something professedly comic. But Ally Sloper proved more depressing than Emily Brontë, and I returned to her with positive relief.

Half-past twelve at last! This was the hour I had fixed as the earliest possible for my midday meal, and I intended that it should consume as much time as possible. The first thing was to capture it. This was before the days when shops offered attractive lunches, and I was far too shy and inexperienced to walk into an hotel. So I bought apples in one shop, buns at another, some chocolate at another, returning with each purchase to the waiting-room, much to the amusement of the attendant, to whom I had confided my folly in waiting so long, and who took a kindly interest in the situation.

At 1.30 I felt it would be quite respectable to appear on the platform and look as if I had just arrived. The train 'for the coast' soon came along, and settling down in an empty carriage I regarded my troubles as over. How jolly! We were actually off! But after going a few hundred yards we stopped. Here there were good views of the town, but I had really seen enough of it for the time. Everything was so quiet that I feared my carriage had been sent aside for repairs. I leaned out and saw a man waving his arms, and guessed that we must be only shunting. We were soon back in the station, to rest a little before starting for the coast.

The journey was scheduled for about four hours, and, as I surmised from the many stops and general leisureliness, it would be actually longer. But I didn't care how long it was, so excited was I at my new surroundings. I had never seen mountains before, and there was the train plodding along right amongst them, now breathing hard up a steep incline and now clattering down the other side. Every bend brought a fresh view of the great masses in all shades of grey. It was a sunny afternoon, and wispy clouds were throwing shadows on purple hill-sides, and valley after valley led away to goodness knew where. I kept hovering from one end of the carriage to the other, and lost all my fatigue in the delight of the new experience. When we went down into the Dovey valley I exclaimed some words that Arthur had taught me—'a dwfn yw tonau Dyfi' (Deep are the waters of Dovey). I surrendered then, admitting at last that Wales could produce finer scenery than Cornwall.

Light relief was afforded by the names of the stations and my attempts to pronounce them. Machynlleth beat me, but I learnt how to spell it, for the train lingered there for ages with shuntings and shoutings. Was I all right for Aberdovey, I asked, and was told that I must change at the Junction for the Coast. One more junction seemed a trifle, but I did not then know my Glandovey. The pull-up here was as decided and as seemingly final as at Euston. Not that there was any town to go to, for the junction lay in the middle of marshy flats, without even a road to connect it with any busy hum. But in itself it was certainly a busy hum, being the nerve centre between North and South Wales, just where the dividing river Dovey spread out into an estuary. The train in which I sat was bound for Aberystwyth and the south, so I gathered that Aberdovey must lie to the north. The extreme congestion on the platform was due to the fact that everybody, no matter his destination, got out. The motive appeared to be social rather than utilitarian. Little knots of farmers, commercial travellers, English holiday-makers, and so on, were chatting as if no thought of continuing their journey were troubling

them. But a number of determined-looking women, laden with bundles of things they had bought or were going to sell—eggs, live poultry, fruit and vegetables—were preparing to take by storm an inferior looking train that was just appearing round the hills to the north. Obviously it was going the wrong way for me, and yet I saw no other. It all seemed to me like the game of croquet in *Alice*. The only porter in sight was too engrossed with luggage to be appealed to. Seeing a nice young English tourist gazing at the scene with amusement, I asked him if he had any idea where I could get the train for Aberdovey.

‘It’s that one that has just come in; you see it turns back here. Let me take your bag and I’ll find you a seat, but I’m afraid this coast train is pretty bad, even worse than our Aberystwyth one.’

‘Oh, don’t let me keep you, your train may be off.’

‘There’s no fear of that,’ he laughed, ‘we have ample warning before she starts.’

And indeed we had. ‘Take your seats, take your seats,’ was shouted at intervals by the porter, in the vain hope that he would get more room to move the luggage about. It was evident that his request had no connexion with the starting of the train.

My pleasant young man found me a seat at last, with apologies for ‘the best he could do’, amidst the market women. The carriage astounded me, for I thought this kind of thing had long ago been turned into tool-sheds for London suburban gardens. It had wooden seats, minute windows, and was open throughout.

‘It won’t be for long,’ were his parting words, ‘Aberdovey is the next station.’

And now I was met by one of the surprises of my life. These women, delivered from the anxieties of getting themselves and their bundles into the train, began to talk. And it was all in a foreign language. The bits of Welsh that my father and Arthur had taught me I had thought to be quaint survivals, and had no idea that people talked like that all day. Meanwhile

I clutched my bag, all ready to jump out at the 'next station'. On we rolled through the meadows by the side of the broadening Dovey, dotted with black cows and little white sheep. We plunged in total darkness through several tunnels where the mountains came down to the riverside. I knew that Aberdovey meant the mouth of the Dovey, so we must be very near. Still no sign of human habitation except a few isolated farms. On and on. At last, as we emerged from one of the tunnels, I saw roofs, another tunnel, then more roofs, and yes, a church tower. Here we are, thought I. Another tunnel, into the station, doubtless. No, into the open country again, and well away, with no symptom of slowing down! I was in despair, for evidently we had passed the place and were in some kind of express. I ventured to ask the woman next me, but she let loose such a flood of Welsh on me that I could only smile pleasantly and bring out one of the few Welsh expressions I knew—'diolch fawr'.

Then, with apparently no reason, the train began to slow down among the fields. I looked out and saw a wooden platform, and a board with 'Aberdovey' on it. And there, too, was Arthur looking anxiously up and down the train. With him was a large clergyman, overflowing with boisterous greetings, as I got out.

'We shall have to walk up, I fear,' said Arthur, 'there's no cab to be had.' As we left the station he pointed to a black box on wheels, drawn by an unbelievably old horse, driven by an unbelievably old man. 'That is the Aberdovey omnibus, "plying between station and town"'. You tell old Rushell where you want to be put down, climb in, bang the door as a sign that you are safe, and in time he starts. Luggage goes on a trolley, driven by a one-armed man who stands up in the middle. We shall see him presently on the road; it's about all the traffic we have.'

It was a goodish walk from the station, for the town straggled along between the hills and the estuary, including on its way a real port with a bright-funnelled little steamer tied up at the quay. I was amused with the walk and glad to stretch my legs

after being cooped up so long. The vicar accompanied us the whole way, not from parochial duty, as I at first imagined, but (as I learned later) because he had nothing else to do, and my arrival was a bit of an event, a trifle to add to the gossip. I was amazed at the way in which both he and Arthur turned on Welsh, as though from a tap, whenever they met an acquaintance, which was about every hundred yards.

At last the vicar said good-bye. He was very stout and didn't want to do our final climb. The tiny house that Arthur had captured for his mother was at the end of a tiny row, lodged precariously on a tiny ledge of the hill-side. We could reach Brynhyfryd only by a rough and very steep path. At the open door stood Mrs. Hughes, with a 'Well, well, well, and here you are at last!' It is curious how a mere tone of voice can make you feel at home at once. A meal was all ready, and as I fell upon it heartily I was able to amuse Arthur and his mother with the story of my twenty-six-hour journey in seven trains; he, poor fellow, had been at the station since 2 o'clock, off and on.

I was pleased to find that Mrs. Hughes herself was English, and even with her long married life in Wales had picked up only enough Welsh to talk to the servant and the tradesmen. All her friends were like Arthur, bi-lingual. It had been like an earthquake for her to leave her old home among the mountains, but she was beginning to find pleasure in her little house at Aberdovey, which was high enough to give her a view of the estuary and the southern hills and the sea beyond the harbour. As she was showing me every corner and every limitation of the house on the following day, as though I were already her daughter, she confessed that she had been in some alarm about me. I was curious to know why. 'Well, you see, dear, the name "Molly" sounded so frivolous.'

The idea of my being frivolous was still funnier than my being considered modern, and Mrs. Hughes soon saw the absurdity of it when I entered with zest into all her household perplexities. Catering was the supreme problem. We could get a leg of superb Welsh mutton every Saturday, from

a little lock-up shop. Superb in quality, not in size. This had to be, in some form or other, the main dish for the week. I began to understand the origin of the Friday fast, for vegetables were definitely predominating in the stew by that day. There was generally 'some ham in the house'. Butter and eggs could be obtained at uncertain intervals from a woman coming with a basket from a farm up among the hills. So uncertain were her visits that the butter had to be salted down in order to keep. There was no fruit to be had, no cake, and most astonishing to me for Wales, no cheese. There was no cool larder, and the heat was often so great that we could have frizzled bacon on the slate flags by the front door. Poultry was too dear to be considered. Bread was made at home by the servant, two vast loaves at a time, and carried down to a bake-house in the village. As it grew very stale I asked her how often she baked.

'Now *you* are here,' she said with pride, 'we bake once a week, but usually once a fortnight.'

This little servant was quite useless at cooking outside the sphere of bread and potato-peeling and mint-chopping, so I asked Mrs. Hughes if I could help a bit in this direction. The response was ready.

'Well, dear, to tell the truth, I should be really grateful if you would undertake the suppers. My sight is getting rather bad for cooking at night.'

Therein she showed great acumen. I believe it wasn't so much her poor sight as the difficulty of making a variety of pleasant meals of the lesser kind, with no resources. *Ex nihilo fiat aliquid*. For the actual cooking there was nothing but one of those open fire-places that break the heart. There was an oven, but it flatly refused to do anything *quickly*, so that any dish with pastry was ruled out. A frying-pan could be poised on the fire, and with that I managed bacon and eggs in all their combinations and permutations. Tinned things were not to be had in those days—not in Aberdovey.

The rumour of a catch of mackerel was sheer glory. Arthur would rush down to the water-side and capture half a dozen



great glittering beauties for as many pence. Their colours were so beautiful that I was quite sorry to cook them. Having no experience or guidance as to how they should be 'dressed', I had to go by the light of nature, and my very first venture was a great success. I cleaned them and laid them in a tin, put flour and butter on the top, a little vinegar and water under them, made up the fire as fiercely as I could, put the tin in the oven, and awaited results. With coffee and home-made marmalade we had a meal fit for a king.

In the village of course there were shops, and I soon knew the character and contents of each. The butcher's shed was opened only on Saturday, when old Rowland would sit and flick the flies off his mutton. The draper's was a gloomy, dusty spot where a melancholy woman would do her best to supply some dire necessity of clothing; I always wondered how she made a living. These were the only two distinctive shops; all the others seemed to sell everything. The liveliest centre of trade was called 'Garibaldi's', because Mr. Jones liked to be known as an Italian warehouseman. Here we could buy oil, tea, bacon, tobacco, sweets, and on Friday the great attraction for Arthur, *The Cambrian News*. I think his name was Jones, but he was always known as 'old Garibaldi'. Sometimes a rumour would reach us that there was some cheese 'in', or some plums, and Mrs. Hughes and I would immediately go 'shopping'. 'Which shop shall we try?' was my natural question, but her routine was invariable. 'I like to patronize them all,' she would say, 'because there are little jealousies.' And how I enjoyed our morning's work to get a bit of cheese. At each shop there was a minute purchase of bacon or tea, or a reel of cotton, after a full discussion of the weather or a recent death. Finally, we would get some tobacco for Arthur at Garibaldi's and then be surprised to hear, 'Inteeet there is some *cheese* to-day.'

So it was not so much the lack of money as the lack of things to buy that caused us to be underfed in the Aberdovey of the eighties.

was to wave regrets to Arthur, but he was otherwise occupied. To my alarm I saw him turn from the road, vault the fence, run on to the line and wave his arms in front of the engine. We stopped, and in another minute he was scrambling into the carriage.

There was never any hurry, because there was bound to be a long wait at the junction before the train from Aberystwyth came in. Just as we were lumbering over the river-bridge into Glandovey Junction we went suddenly soft—ominously soft. Arthur's head was out at once.

'By George! We've gone off the rails!'

Few things can look more helpless than a Cambrian engine off the rails in such a remote spot. All the passengers climbed out to walk the few yards from the bridge to the platform, not attempting to disguise their glee at the disaster. All *we* had to do was to board the Aberystwyth train when it came in. But the poor station-master was at his wits' end, not having any jack or any possible means at hand for replacing the engine. Completely losing control of himself he tore up and down the platform swearing in Welsh, to Arthur's rapture. This was our last vision of him as the main-line train took us reluctantly away from the drama.

The incident made grand conversation for our friends at Machynlleth, which we reached about 11. Our 'early start' and 'dangerous journey' were made the excuse for us to be plied with fruit and cake and wine. Then a stroll round the town, involving chats with almost every one we met, soon brought the time for 1 o'clock dinner. This was a serious meal of boiled mutton and vegetables, followed by apple pudding, everything garnished with copious sauces. Helpings were large, in spite of protests, and I sensed that feelings would be hurt if anything were left on the plate. Very welcome was a country walk after this, when I was able to enjoy the colours of the hills while Arthur conversed, for the most part in Welsh, with our host and his son. Tea-time was fixed for 4 o'clock, because our only possible return train started at 5, and it would never do to hurry a meal. A cup of tea

would certainly have been welcome, but behold there was a real sit-down affair. The main dish was 'light cakes'. This famous Welsh concoction is a kind of pancake, made with flour and eggs and buttermilk. You eat them hot, with sugar and butter, the very thing for a winter tea after a long tramp. But for a summer afternoon, hard upon such a massive dinner! The cook kept sending in fresh relays, straight from the pan, and they were piled on our plates, with the warning, 'Remember there's a journey before you'. I could only be thankful that the train started too early to permit a supper to follow.

Of course it was only the time-table that 'started'. The train for England was as usual about an hour late. Arthur was quite willing in this case to be at the station at the scheduled time, because there was a bookstall to which he glued himself. Mrs. Hughes was quietly triumphing in the booty she had captured in the shops, a cake and some cheese. As soon as the train was off Arthur said, 'I couldn't find anything decent on that bookstall, so we must fall back on our reserves', taking out a little volume of Montaigne which he had put in his pocket when he started out. 'The mere feel of it in my pocket,' he said, 'helps me to bear the plethora of physical and the lack of mental food one has to endure in Machynlleth.' We settled down to read one of the essays together, and even the wait at Glandovey Junction (now in normal working order again) seemed quite short. I have never passed through that station since without recalling some of Montaigne's advice on learning how to die.

It was not many days after this that another invitation arrived for an outing that involved the same railway journey, but a very different kind of entertainment. An old friend of Arthur's boyhood wrote to ask him to bring me to see his people in their home near Machynlleth, an old country mansion up among the hills and woods. He was a few years younger than Arthur, and known to us then as 'Dick Atkin', but he is now a Law Lord. His 'people' consisted of his mother and grandmother—a little alarming in prospect; but I had hardly been in the house an hour when I began to wonder which was the more delightful, and longing for my mother

to meet them, for they seemed to be of her 'make'. The grandmother, Mrs. Ruck, was all that one could imagine of queenly dignity combined with an engaging homeliness. She was undisguisedly keenly interested to know the girl whom her dear friend Arthur was to marry, and in some subtle way that women always understand but can't describe, she made me feel that I was approved to the full. She showed me over the old house, talking cheerily of the deep happiness of married life, taking me into her room to see the four-poster of colossal size, on which all her children had been born. She interspersed her talk with enthusiastic praise of Arthur.

'If I don't tell you about him, nobody will,' said she. 'He has been so splendid to his mother. Although not the eldest, he has been the only one of her four sons to come to her help with time and money through that dreadful uprooting from her old home. One's own home, why it's heaven as one gets old! She looks to him for everything. And remember this, dear, a good son makes a good husband.'

I listened greedily to this and much more, and she ended with, 'I'm so glad that he is at the same Inn as Dick, and I'm sure they will both have a fine career at the Bar.'

Her daughter regaled me in another fashion. She had travelled all over the world, and had gone through amazing adventures, which she related in a matter-of-fact, off-hand style, as if it were no more than walking down the road. But the one thing I remember best about her is the rate at which she knitted while she told her stories. When I commented on this, she said she could easily make a sock in a day, but that she much preferred mending an old one. Now I could believe her marvellous adventures, but showed open rejection of this statement.

'You can't possibly *like* mending!'

'Yes, I do. Any one can make a thing all new and nice. But to make a good thing out of an abandoned one is far more creative work—a work of redemption!'

In the afternoon Dick took Arthur and me for a walk still farther up the hill-side, and I listened in silence to the talk of the

two men, always an engrossing occupation for me. Presently we reached a high point whence we had an extensive view of the valley and the sweep of the river. This was a favourite show-piece of Dick's, and he was pleased at my enthusiasm. I ventured to say that my brother Dym thought that no view was perfect unless there were a river in it. This set a discussion going in true legal fashion: first whether Dym's idea was true; second, if true, what was the reason. I forget the conclusion they came to, if any, although I have long since discovered why a river is necessary to complete satisfaction. It is odd that in the dream of heaven there was to be 'no more sea', while a river was to be the main feature; into what did it run?

As for that visit, I forget about the journey there and the journey home. I forget what we had for dinner or tea. But the people, the house among the woods, the weather, the talk, the view of the river—all these remain as an abiding delight.

### § 3

A third day's outing involved the same Machynlleth opening, but in other respects was a striking contrast to the other two. Arthur wanted to show me the valley where he had spent his boyhood. No invitation was required; we were just to set out. I fancy that he had misgivings about it, for he told me afterwards that he had made up his mind never to marry any one but a girl who knew all his home people and early surroundings. And here was I, a Londoner, and a complete stranger to everything and everybody. What if I should smile at the countrified ways, or show any airs of greater intelligence! He gave me no descriptions beforehand, but plunged me into an utterly new experience.

At Machynlleth station we went down some wooden steps to the 'terminus' of a toy railway. After many social greetings with other intending passengers, we boarded one of the cars of which the train consisted, and in due time one of the engines of the Company began to agitate itself and eventually to start.

A fig for your boasted 'observation cars' in America! Without advertisements or folders, or self-consciousness, the little train rattled away (for it cheered the lonely valley with plenty of mechanical noise) along the side of a heavenly trout-stream, overhung with tall trees and surrounded by mountains. Every now and again we had fresh peeps of the winding valley, ever changing in its colour effects. Arthur saw my delight and said, 'This is the stream where we used to bathe and catch trout when we were boys.' No wonder, I thought, that you poured scorn on our little stream near Reskadinnick.

There were several stations, whose names I learnt to pronounce. In its even-handed justice Bradshaw awarded Ffridd Gate the same size print as Aberystwyth, but it surely was the smallest station in the world. The gate was there all right, leading into a field, and beside it were a couple of planks for a platform, and on this was a kind of tiny sentry-box. If by some extraordinary chance a man wanted to get in here, he would signal his idea, and the engine-driver would pull up, unlock the little box, and issue a ticket to him. At least that was the scheme. In point of fact there was very little of this ticket nonsense at all on the railway. What money the Company received came almost entirely from strangers, English tourists, and other fools. All its Welsh patrons in the valley stepped off and on as they pleased. While we were in full swing plugging up the valley there was a sudden grinding of brakes and a jerky pull-up. 'I know what's the matter,' cried Arthur, jumping out, 'there's a sheep on the line.' He returned in a few moments to report all well—he had driven the sheep out of danger.

At every station I seemed to make a new friend. Invariably the greeting at each introduction was, 'Indeed, now! Well, well, indeed!' And this can be made astonishingly warm and hearty. At Escairgailiog in breezed the doctor, who was overjoyed to see Arthur and immediately asked us to lunch with him at Corris, the metropolis of the valley. Here there was quite a crowd on the little platform, and I exclaimed at the number of travellers. Arthur laughed. 'They're not going by

train; they've just come to see who has arrived, and get a bit of gossip; your appearance will be quite an item.'

I gathered from the conversation during our lunch at the doctor's that Arthur and his brothers were the main source of local interest. His eldest brother had lately become vicar of Portmadoc, and his youngest brother was about to start a medical practice in Flint. It was this youngest one, Alfred, in whom the doctor took most interest. When quite a boy he had accompanied the doctor on his rounds; for these the doctor's only carriage was the railway, and the infrequency of the trains put him in many an awkward fix. He had sometimes been obliged to give sedatives to two expectant mothers while he attended a third. Of course, young Alfred picked up endless medical lore of a natural kind, and it was said that the patients preferred his visits to those of the doctor. When I came to know him (shortly after this luncheon party) I immediately understood this preference; for Alfred was a good-looking, sunny, jolly fellow, full of good stories, and no one could help feeling better for his mere presence. I may as well say here that he had a future of absorbing devotion to his work. In later years I went to meet him once in London, where he had come up for his F.R.C.S.

'Are you funking it, Alfred?' I asked.

'No, Molly, I'm not. You just put your finger on any spot in your body, and I'll tell you *all* that lies beneath it, right away down.'

He had the reputation later still for being the best anatomist in the kingdom, and was in the middle of writing a three-volume work on *Practical Anatomy* when the Boer War put an end to his life, and it fell to Arthur (now Sir Arthur) Keith to edit and complete his book.

As soon as our lunch was over we went off again to the station. Twice a day the train made a final lap to its terminus at the extreme head of the valley at Aberllefenni. Here was the large slate quarry of which Arthur's father had been the manager. A broad-built, strong-willed man, he had been the terror of any delinquent quarryman. He carried a huge slate-

whistle whose blast used to send the men scurrying to their work. Fronwen, the house that he built for his wife, lay on the hill-side between the railway and the rushing stream, and had an orchard, garden, and chicken-run. What entranced me most was the littleness, and the fewness, and the remoteness of everything. I felt that I could take it all in, and love it, and that Arthur's people were my people. At the tiny post office Annie and Bill (I never heard their surnames) received me rapturously with the very few words of English at their command. It was the same at every dwelling we entered, and I don't think we missed any.

That visit was only the first of innumerable others in later years. Meanwhile I sucked much more information about the valley from Mrs. Hughes. There had been no lack of food, although it mostly revolved round the sheep; they even had 'mutton hams'. Mutton fat was used to make candles, the only artificial light obtainable. Mrs. Hughes showed me her old mould into which she used to pour the fat for them; this and her snuffers she had kept from sheer sentiment. For the clothing of her husband and sons a travelling tailor paid annual visits. Arthur could remember seeing him sitting tailor-wise on the kitchen table, usually staying a week to complete his job. By most of the inhabitants of the valley this tailor was regarded with awe, for he could read and write. One old woman begged him to read a chapter from her Bible to the assembled family when his day's work was done. Now he had been annoyed to note that he had not been offered tea with his supper, although he had seen a pot on the hob. In those days tea was a great luxury, being ten to fifteen shillings a pound. So on the second evening he selected the latter part of Deuteronomy xxvii, and inserted a verse—'Cursed be the housewife that bringeth not forth tea to the tailor'. When the reading was over the housewife approached him with, 'Is that bit about tea really in the Bible?' 'Oh yes,' said he, pretending to look for it, and at last running his finger over a verse and repeating it slowly. Tea was brought forth for him after that, every night.

Recreation had to be provided by the valley itself, and it



seemed to have consisted mainly of mountain walking and fishing in the summer, and singing, dancing, and card-playing in the winter. The scarcity of instrumental music can be guessed from one disaster that Arthur related to me: a big dance was arranged, people came from far and near, and the band (one fiddler) from a considerable distance. When all was in trim to start dancing it was found that the fiddler had left his bow behind! I expect they made up for it by singing, for that seems to be the Welshman's supreme hobby.

I hardly wonder at a country parson's taking to drink. Often enough he is sufficiently educated to be dissatisfied with the mental capacity of his flock, but not sufficiently to content himself with books or a hobby. It was so in Corris. There the little church that serves the whole district stands in the loveliest surroundings. Thither, twice every Sunday, the whole Hughes family walked the long way from Aberllefenni. Mr. Hughes, as a churchwarden, sat in a front pew, with his wife and boys in a solid phalanx. Arthur had a vivid recollection of Alfred's trying to play with a hassock once, and being taken out then and there and whipped in the churchyard. A little later Alfred was to figure in another scene; one Sunday morning the whole neighbourhood was duly mustered, but no parson. People began to look about them and whisper their wonder. The situation became tense. At last, by consultations and urgent gestures Mr. Hughes was induced to go over to the vicarage to see what was the matter (although the congregation had little doubt as to its nature). If any one could manage a difficulty, he could. Another wait, more hopeful, but still rather too long. Mrs. Hughes then took a hand (knowing her husband). As Alfred was sitting at the end of the pew she leant over to him and told him to run to the vicarage and bring his father back, whatever. Again a long wait. I had this story from Alfred himself, and how he laughed at the recollection of that errand. As he came up to the vicarage he saw the old housekeeper standing at the door, looking very agitated.

'Come in, come in, my little boy,' she cried, obviously

relieved that somebody had appeared in her trouble, and showed Alfred into the study. There sat his father and the vicar, both comfortably drinking, but too far gone to move.

This will be credible enough to Welsh people, who know that nothing of a diplomatic nature can be done hurriedly. Mrs. Hughes told me that she once took the train into Machynlleth to have a bad tooth taken out. The dentist was distressed at the pain she was suffering, brought out sherry and chatted of livelier matters. 'Indeed, Mrs. Hughes,' said he, 'I don't think I need put you to the pain of taking out that tooth. I believe you are well enough to go home now.' And she actually returned with the tooth and feeling all right. One wonders how he made a living. But there seemed to have been very little in the way of actual money transactions, especially from a patient to a doctor. A good fat goose or a bottle of wine was a more common thank-offering.

Of crime in the valley there seemed to be none. Once only did the well-known policeman, who patrolled the whole district, appear at Mrs. Hughes's door. Some days previously a disreputable-looking tramp had come to her and begged for an old coat. She searched the house, but all she could find, that was not actually in use, was a richly embroidered waistcoat that her father had worn years ago at some civic function in Shrewsbury. Why keep things just for sentiment, thought she, and gave it to the tramp. It was an embarrassing gift, for if displayed it took away the look of poverty that was his chief asset. So he stripped and wore it next his skin until he should find a possible market for it. However, at his next casual home he was required to have a bath, and the waistcoat was discovered. 'Mrs. Hughes of Fronwen gave it to me,' he asserted. The idea of such a gift to a tramp was so ridiculous that the policeman had come all the way to have the story confirmed, but he might have guessed that no tramp in his senses would steal such an unnegotiable thing.

That first visit of mine to the valley was over forty years ago, but a recent visit has shown me little change. The quarry works are deserted at Aberllefenni, and look as melancholy as

the ghosts of the Cornish tin-mines. But Corris has the same two inns, shops, and up-and-down streets surrounding the station and the beautiful churchyard. . . . At a prominent corner of the village, where you can get a sight of Cader, stands a column, a monument to Alfred. To me a more touching memorial of him is a bundle of letters from South Africa, tied up with a bit of tape, and labelled in Arthur's handwriting, 'Dear Alfred'.

## XII

### *'A dwfn yw tonnau Dyfi'*

#### § 1

THOSE expeditions were of the 'private duty bound' nature. Most of our days we just wasted gloriously, doing what we liked. Our likings were strictly limited by our means. We had to look at every penny, except in the matter of newspapers and tobacco, which I had known from childhood to be the breath of life to a man. Now the railway consumed money as well as time, and there was no other means of getting about to 'see Wales' than by long walks. I have seen more of it in one day in my son's car than in all my visits to it in the last century.

There were certain special bits of the Wales that Arthur loved which simply had to be visited whatever the cost, and for these a car would have been no use. The first charge on the estate was the ascent of Cader. 'Cader Idris', I learnt, meant 'Arthur's Seat.' The mountain had dominated the valley and been the playground of Arthur and his brothers in their boyhood. They had been to the summit countless times, and more than once Arthur and Alfred had spent the night there to see the sun rise.

So one fine morning we reached the foot of Cader by way of the toy railway from Towyn to Abergynolwyn. The early slopes were easy enough, and I pranced on heartily, thinking, 'Well, if this is mountain climbing, why all the fuss about it?' I had slackened my pace a bit by the time we reached the sinister shores of Llyn Cae, and Arthur suggested a rest and an attack on the sandwiches, before the real climbing began. He pointed out to me the 'Fox's Path', away on the other side of the Lake.

'Is that the path we have to follow?' I asked.

'No,' he laughed, 'not quite so steep as that.'

I found my stick of great use during the next half-hour's climb, for it was no longer merely walking.

'There's the top, quite close!' said I in triumph.

'No, not yet by a long way. Old Cader has a way of telescoping out. Each "top" that you see turns out to be only a nice place to get a good view of the next.'

I felt a fool, and determined to plod on without offering any further encouraging remarks, although I was pretty sure several times that the coming peak was really the top.

Presently we found ourselves in a cloud, and Arthur was moving more cautiously. 'Keep close up,' he said, 'we're nearly there . . . ah, here it is. This little shed marks the top. I wish to goodness this mist would clear, or we shall get no view at all.'

We fixed half an hour as the limit that we ought to wait. It brought us no lift, but rather a thickening of the mist. So very reluctantly we began the descent. Our plan was to catch the last train from Arthog at 7.30. We scrambled down the slopes well enough, stopping now and again to enjoy the evening views all the more splendid after the mist. When we reached the road in the valley it was nearly 7, and we quickened our pace.

'How far to Arthog?' I panted to a man we were passing. 'Three miles.'

'Good gracious!' said I, 'we can't do it.'

'They always say three miles,' said Arthur, 'it's not a bit of good asking them.' And sure enough, after some ten minutes hard walking, another man told me 'three miles', for I couldn't resist asking. We laughed and took heart. When 7.30 had past Arthur threw out the comforting idea that the train was bound to be late, as it came from Dolgelly. He had hardly said this when he cried, 'There's the station', pointing to something in the middle distance.

'By George, yes, and the train is in it,' and he broke into a headlong run. Although I knew he could hold it up for me if he got there before it started, I was impelled to run too. It was now getting dark, and among the few lights of the station I distinguished the ominous red rear-lamp of the train. I kept

my eye on it, as if that would prevent it's moving. When I panted on to the platform Arthur was waiting with a door open, and we flung ourselves in. That wretched train didn't start for another ten minutes! At the time I think we were more annoyed at this than if we had missed it, though what we should have done in the latter case we never cared to discuss. But those who happen to know the kind of walk it is from Arthog to simply anywhere will guess what Arthur was worrying about as he ran.

A still worse predicament threatened us another time. One hot day we determined to try to reach our old friend Glandovey by water. While Arthur went down to the shore to see whether he could bargain for a boat, I cut sandwiches, hard-boiled two eggs, and put some tea in a bottle (wrapped in a rug to keep it hot).

'Let's start at once,' said Arthur on his return. 'I've captured a boat. The tide will be high about 4, and if we can reach Glandovey by 3 we can have our tea there and come back on the ebb. Now have you got plenty to eat in that basket?'

'Yes. I've put in enough for lunch on the way, and for tea when we get there. And I'm taking our sketching things too, as we shan't have to carry them.'

'And I got a bottle of beer from the inn. So off we go.'

However happy one's life has been, there are few days to which one can point and say, 'I would like to live that over again, exactly as it was'. But every bit of that day had either its fun or its thrill, both at the time and in retrospect. Mrs. Hughes saw us off with some misgiving and urgent warnings not to be out late on the river. She was always full of warnings and misgivings, but she knew no more than we did of the difficulties in front of us. The Dovey estuary looks broad and beautiful and inviting, as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, but she is a lady of moods and asks for navigation, not just rowing up and down. She has sandbanks always shifting, and we had to follow the channels that seemed best. When we came to a fine stretch of deep water, up would go our sail, and if there was the least puff of breeze how lordly we felt floating along for awhile without effort. But soon would come a dead

calm and sagging of the sail, or a sandbank and a struggle with the oars again. It was hungry work, requiring the sandwiches and beer.

As the river broadened out towards Glandovey the sailing was easier, and we laughed at the train puffing heavily along, while we were gliding serenely, coming into the almost lake-like expanse of water near Glandovey. Here a tongue of wooded land stretched out into the estuary, and as we spied a convenient post for mooring our boat we disembarked, having a good hour in hand before the tide would turn. First of all we reconnoitred round for a good subject to sketch. Not that there was any lack of subject in all directions, but we had to find something we could manage. We had to avoid trees, and confine our attempts to the hills and marshlands of Ynyslas. We dashed the cobalt about recklessly and jeered at each other's results.

While Arthur was enjoying his after-tea pipe, I went down to the water's edge to see whether the tide had turned. Yes, it was an inch below the mark we had put, so I proposed our starting at once. Then came the best of the day, the tide and a gentle breeze both with us, and the perfection of Welsh scenery. A sandbank now and again would persuade us quite feelingly that we had better not linger, but a shove with an oar soon got us into a channel again. The tiller was hardly any use, for the wide stretch of water looked equally deep and our first notice of a sandbank was the actual sensation of the keel grinding into it. These banks soon became more frequent, and we ran on them so quickly with the breeze, that Arthur thought it safer to take the sail down—not so picturesque or so lordly, but safer.

A spectacular sunset was thrown in for us, and we disguised our rhapsodies over it by discussing the colours that ought to be used for it. I was all for a 'touch of rose-madder', but Arthur scorned this as theatrical. He maintained that you can do everything in nature with light-red, cobalt, and yellow-ochre. 'What about that bit of emerald green marsh-land over there?' said I, and he gave in.

'Sunset! By Jabers!' he suddenly cried. 'We must be getting on.'

He was always late for everything, or only in time because 'the party of the second part' was late. I soon came to know his three oaths, varying according to the seriousness of the situation. 'By George' was so common that I took no notice of it. 'By Jabers' was more cause for anxiety and set me rushing for a man's four last things—hat, stick, bag, and baccy. But when I heard 'By the piper that played before Moses' I stood back, knowing that the pressing need was a clear field for a rush. In fact there was never time for the reference to Moses, and I only found out about his share in the oath when I asked Arthur one day (in tranquillity) who the piper was.

Well, after the sun had disappeared we got on, but not very fast, and it was definitely evening when we slithered on to a rather obstinate bank. The more we got our oars to work and the more desperately we pushed, the more the keel snuggled comfortably into the sand.

'By the piper!' cried Arthur, and leapt into the water. And me too. Upon the word 'piper' I plunged in. But the old boat was not much lighter for our having relieved it, and there we were, one on each side, tugging with no effect. It was no occasion for being mealy-mouthed, and with a stronger expression than 'the piper' Arthur said,

'We're only making things worse. We must push her back instead of forward.'

The tide had driven us on a bank we couldn't cross, and now we had to go quickly into reverse and undo the little we had already done. For some time our pushing had no effect, for the tide was ebbing pretty fast. Then we agreed on a mighty effort—one, two, three—*go*. She moved. We hurried to another effort before the tide could get busy on us again, and then another and another, till at last she was free and in a channel again. We jumped in, but went along with the utmost caution, continually sounding. It was now getting dusk, but we could see a light or two in the distance from the scattered houses of Aberdovey, and the channels grew broader and safer.



We could now afford to laugh. I hadn't dared to when we were pushing, because Arthur looked so fierce about it. I had not worried about the troubles attendant on our sticking on that sandbank; I could only see the funny side of our having to push our own vehicle.

'Won't mother be in a taking!' was our main thought as we climbed our steep path. And indeed she was. She had placed the big lamp in the highest window, to guide us. She had put kettles of water on the kitchen fire, as a kind of general preparation for recovering people from drowning. She had looked out her reserve of brandy, and was pacing up and down the flags of our little Brynhyfryd Terrace. We hailed her cheerily, and came in very wet, dirty, and hungry, but not bad enough for brandy.

## § 2

Those sandbanks showed another of their ugly tricks a few days later. It was the bounden duty of Arthur's brothers to come to see their future sister. The first to come was Alfred, the doctor. He was so charming that I was quite unaware of being inspected, and only felt that I had now collected another splendid brother. He was full of energy, and as he looked out over the estuary he had a shrewd notion that there would be cockles in all that sand. He was fond of singing 'Molly Malone', and perhaps that put it into his head that it would be jolly to go 'cockling with Molly'. We consulted the old Aberdovey salts, who waved their hands towards the Borth shore, and told us that there were plenty of cockles to be had over there at low tide.

'How do you catch cockles?' said I, having no notion of what they even looked like.

'Oh, quite easy,' said Alfred, 'you just pick them up and stow them in a bag or a pail, but they jump about like anything.'

So while the boys went to hire a boat Mrs. Hughes looked out a kitchen pail, a canvas bag, and a fishing-basket, and as soon as the tide was about right we started across to the farther side of the river, stranded the boat, and strayed apart from one another with our receptacles in the grand pursuit of trying to

get the biggest amount. The cockles certainly jumped astounding distances, by what internal mechanism I couldn't make out. I was examining one intently to see how he did it, when I heard a shout from Alfred, a shout of that peculiar quality that suggests terror. Arthur and I, both far away absorbed in cockling, rushed towards him.

'Keep away! For God's sake keep away!' he shouted. 'If you come near you'll make it worse. Get a rope.'

But Arthur had already seen what was the matter, and had turned and rushed to the boat to fetch the rope. Meanwhile I was horrified to see Alfred dragging his feet with the utmost difficulty out of the sucking sand. He managed to get the better of it just as Arthur came up, but he told us that he had quite thought he was in for a ghastly death, till the mere sight of the rope gave him zip enough to keep calm and cease struggling and floundering wildly, which is fatal.

This incident dashed our enthusiasm for cockles, but we took back our spoils to Mrs. Hughes, not telling her of the risks of the chase. She was quite equal to cooking them, although she had never faced them before. Only give me the food, was her slogan, and I'll cook it. Seeing the quantities we had brought, she unearthed her largest cauldron, which might have come straight out of a fairy tale. Our little servant flew about making up the fire and pouring forth her excitement in Welsh. When the water came to the boil, in went all the cockles. How long should they have? Arthur and Alfred held a medico-legal consultation, and up and down they had it until Arthur stared into the cauldron and gave his considered opinion that the cockles were no longer fighting against fate. So they were decanted on to our plates, and by the time we had got them out of their shells our appetites were not critical, and we ate rather freely. But what with one thing and another we didn't care if we never heard the word cockle again.

'I'll take you for a day's real fishing.' Thus Arthur to me a day or two later when we were alone again. As there was no stream near Aberdovey, the scene of the festival was to be Tal-y-llyn, another playground of his boyhood. Like my

brother Dym, when he was 'in trout' all other interests went under. He buried himself for hours in preparations, testing his rod about the room, hunting out his other fishing-tackle, putting his extra-strong eyeglasses where he wouldn't forget them, and going through his fly-book. This selection of flies amazed me. They all looked pretty much the same, and I had no idea that trout were so picky about their food. It seemed that they would eagerly jump at some delicacy with a long Welsh name, meaning the red devil. I went to bed leaving Arthur buried in these intricacies. We were to be off by the first train in the morning, but there was no fear in this case of Arthur's missing it. Throughout life I found that only two things would get him out of bed spontaneously—a day's fishing or a case in Court.

We started like two explorers, with everything needful slung about us, but no sandwiches this time, as we were to have lunch at the inn. To ordinary tourists a boat for the day at Tal-y-llyn is expensive, but we had one for nothing. Arthur was well known to the people at the inn who let the boats out. They received us as honoured guests, offered us any boat we liked to choose, and wouldn't take a farthing for the good lunch they gave us. The inter-relationship of these people was the most extraordinary I have ever come across. A widow with two children had married a widower with two children; two more children were born and were now grown up, and the parents were dead. These six lived together and carried on the inn, and their names and relationship to one another were an amusing puzzle to visitors, and a kind of extra attraction.

One thing I did thoroughly know about fly-fishing; my brother Dym had taught me that trout don't like petticoats. So I made it my business, while Arthur stood up in the flat-bottomed boat and flung his line, to say nothing and keep myself as small as possible. For this purpose I had secreted the little Greek text at which I was slaving for my next examination, and I calculated that during that stern afternoon I made out two (or three at most) sentences for every trout that Arthur caught.

This was not so dull for me as it sounds. It was my first experience of being not only neglected by Arthur, but completely forgotten in the absorbing pursuit of his hobby. As time went on I caught myself hugging little neglects of all kinds, as great compliments. Evidently he trusted me not to mind, and not to be looking for trifling attentions and consideration. No doubt I had my brothers to thank for having early schooled me in the idea that a man has his own life to lead and there are times when he is like the trout in a distaste for 'petticoats about'. But I had no one but our two selves to thank for discovering that such neglect over trifles is compatible with the deepest passion. It was a great pleasure to me, too, when Arthur would break out excitedly in the middle of one of our discussions with 'But, my dear Sir!'

Such arguments on every kind of topic we carried on usually during our tramps over the hills in sunshine, wind or rain. And yet not quite every topic; at least there were some things that we didn't probe too deeply, tacitly assuming one another's ideas and feelings about them, or preferring to leave closer discussions for the future. I regret now the many things I left unasked and unsaid. But on the whole perhaps the best rule for married life is the one that is imposed on Arctic explorers, who are forbidden to discourse to one another too freely on their private concerns and innermost thoughts. Arthur and I felt the amplitude of the life before us, and did not strive to express ourselves fully. Against our background of matter-of-fact talk an occasional break-out of deeper feeling took on a special emphasis. For instance, Arthur said to me once as he was stuffing the tobacco into his pipe, and apropos of nothing, 'If we had met in such circumstances that we couldn't be married we could never have been friends, could we?'

In fact, we never did attempt to put our love for one another into words—until the end. After twenty years of married life, Arthur was run over at the foot of Chancery Lane and taken into Barts to die. I reached him in time for half an hour of life, which he spent entirely in pouring out all the pent-up expressions of love that he had strength to utter, in which the word

'glorious' was incessantly repeated. In my own anguish I hadn't the sense to reply in the same language, but could only keep on imploring him to fight for life. 'No, Molly, I'm done for,' he said, and began again on his chant of triumph.

### § 3

Setting aside the few 'expeditions' of those holidays, our main amusements were sketching, walking, and bathing. When the tide was up the long stretch of shore beyond the bar was grand for Arthur's bathing, but at low tide he said he had to walk half-way to Ireland to get a swim. Mixed bathing had never even been thought of. Women had to bathe in a secluded nook up the estuary, and only at stated times (varying according to the tide). The town crier walked up and down the front, proclaiming, first in Welsh and then in English:

'Ladies to be bathed. . . . At Penhelig. . . . From 11 to 1.' The changes that fifty years have brought about can be illustrated in another odd way. There was a retired sea-captain living on our hill-side whose wife was regarded as little short of an abandoned woman; the only foundation for this opinion that we could discover was that some one passing her window had seen her behind the curtain, *smoking!*

Our evening occupations after supper followed a fairly regular routine, as we gathered round the one big oil lamp. Mrs. Hughes generally knitted, Arthur read Law, and I struggled with a bit of Greek. We always broke the evening's work with one game of chess. At this I was only a little better than Charles, whose main idea of strategy was to move his king now and again 'because that puts them out'. By keeping on the defensive, and occasionally making an attack that surprised myself as much as Arthur, I sometimes won a game, and was always strong enough to keep him from slacking. I also chastened him by inventing the rule that the winner must put away the pieces—a job he detested. On the few occasions when he saw his king hopelessly cornered he would exclaim, 'Now you can put the men away'.

Last thing every evening we plotted some scheme for the next day—how we could get the most for the least money. The ordinary 'tourist places' didn't tempt us, but when Arthur's parson brother, Llewelyn, came to visit us he insisted that 'Molly ought to see' this and that. So to please him we agreed to let him take us to the Torrent Walk. This was a regular guide-book affair, and didn't make much impression on me, and might have slipped my memory entirely had it not been for a curious incident on the way. Llewelyn, acting as host and guide, stood us a lunch at the inn nearest to the Walk. As we were starting off he asked the landlord which was the shortest road to take, for the short cuts were rather intricate.

'Take the dog with you, Sir. He's quite used to showing tourists the way. . . . Here, Prince! Take these visitors to the Torrent Walk.'

Off we started, with the dog a yard or two ahead.

'Be sure you don't speak Welsh,' shouted the landlord after us, or he won't take you. He thinks Welshmen ought to know the way.'

'All right, we'll remember,' answered Llewelyn, laughing, for we naturally thought this was one of those 'dog-stories'. All went well for some way, the dog duly trotting ahead, till one of those showers so common in Wales caught us suddenly. Spying a cowshed we went into it for shelter, dog and all. Presently a farm labourer came in for shelter too. Llewelyn, parson-like, began to chat with him about the weather and what not, in Welsh of course; and Arthur joined in.

'Look there!' I cried, and pointed to the dog, who was fast disappearing along the road to the inn. We put it down to his impatience at the delay, but the labourer said that every one knew the dog, and that it was true that nothing would induce him to show Welsh people the way.

This incident made me ashamed of my own lack of enterprise. Even the dog was bilingual. The smallest children in the street would be shouting at one another in Welsh, and be able to turn on good English whenever required; and there was I, only able to say a few phrases in Welsh that Arthur had

taught me, such as 'Ydwyf yn dy garu di'. However, I was hoping to surprise him by picking up a little quite quietly from our servant. Her English was so simple, so free from the trammels of gender, number, and case, that I concluded her Welsh would be equally uncomplicated. Her invariable reference to her mistress as 'he' showed me how easily we could discard gender from our pronouns as we have from our adjectives. So, like Gonzalo, I had great comfort from this fellow, and finding an odd hour when Arthur was out of the way, I begged her to teach me some Welsh. She was all willing and proud. Now I knew the numbers from 1 to 7 from 'The Bells of Aberdovey', so I asked her to begin by teaching me some further numbers. In order to fix her mind definitely on the problem, I pointed to the old grandfather clock, and extracted the numbers in Welsh up to 12. Flushed with victory, I said,

'Now can you tell me what "five minutes past twelve" would be?'

Yes, she could, and steadily we went on to 'ten-past', 'fifteen-past' . . . up to 'five-to'. I then approached a more delicate problem.

'How would you say "twenty-three minutes past seven"?' She shook her head and denied that there was such a thing.

'But suppose your train starts at seven-twenty-three, and you want to catch it?'

'Well,' she replied with finality in her tone, 'you must just go early.'

My most valuable lesson from this was that if you want to pick up a language you must pick it up, and not try to extract it forcibly. However, there was one word that I did learn carefully from Arthur, in all its strange mutation of consonants—*cariad*, *'gariad*', *'f'nghariad i*'. In later years I once received a telegram in London from Arthur in Scotland: *'carried, carried*'. I wondered what the postmistress thought as to the meaning of the message—either that some one had been anxious for the success of a resolution at a meeting, or that it was a secret code, as of course it was. My favourite context for the word

was a line from Dafydd ap Gwilym, inscribed by Arthur in a book he gave me:

*Hanodd ym bron, hon a hyllt,  
Had o gariad.*

(In my heart, this stormy heart, she sowed the seed of love.)

§ 4

The life on Sundays at Aberdovey in '88 was more restricted than any I had known before—if life it could be called. It made me think of the Pharisee who thought the best way to avoid breaking the Sabbath was to remain in bed all day. Neither work nor play of any kind was permissible. Boating, sketching, bathing, chess, law-reading, Greek translation, knitting, novel-reading—all had to be forsworn. However, Arthur managed to play his fiddle *ad lib* by wisely beginning with 'Adeste Fideles', and leaving Mrs. Hughes to assume that all the rest were hymn tunes. Presumably this insistence on Sabbath-keeping arose from the conviction that boredom would send people to church. No one but the definitely disreputable had any idea of staying away from a morning service of some kind. So each Sunday morning, after a late breakfast, Mrs. Hughes and Arthur and I dressed ourselves as grandly as we could, found our gloves and prayer-books, and walked sedately to the accompaniment of the wretched little tinkle called the church bell. This was always a source of annoyance to me, because one of my excitements in visiting Aberdovey was the chance of hearing the 'Bells of Aberdovey'.

Services as a rule were in Welsh, but there was an extra one, in English, on Sunday morning for the sake of the English residents and the few summer visitors. As we went in we met the Welsh congregation coming out from their previous service. Arthur would much have preferred to attend this, but his mother couldn't follow it easily. However, he always used a Welsh prayer-book, and all his life sang the Psalms in Welsh wherever he happened to be. In Aberdovey he had to read them instead of singing, but nothing made much difference to the miserable



mutter of alternate verses that was customary. Only the Gloria was sung, and that I was soon able to sing in Welsh with Arthur; it sounds much more impressive in Welsh than in English. Sermons were dull, but I got some recreation out of them by noticing how the parson worked out his scheme. This, Arthur said, consisted in taking some word, such as 'courage', looking up all the places in Cruden where it occurs, and talking a bit about each. One Sunday I was pleased to see a young visiting curate mount the pulpit. His English was clearly limited, and his Welsh accent very strong. I was all ears. Giving out his text several times in different directions, he proceeded to tell us all that the sacred writer had omitted (much to the sacred writer's credit, I thought).

'Does he say that Enoch was honest? No. Only this, "Enoch walked with God".' (He pronounced it 'wokkt with Godd'). 'Does he tell us that he was generous? No. Only "Enoch walked with God". Are we told that he was kind-hearted? No. Only that "Enoch walked with God". These four words "Enoch walked with God" sum up all that we know of his life—just this—"Enoch walked with God". What more do we want to know than this, "Enoch walked with God"?' And so on.

Some English public-school boys on holiday were sitting in the pew in front of us, and I saw them bending as if in prayer or meditation. Mrs. Hughes was eyeing them with displeasure. I was biting the inside of my cheeks, and trying to think of a funeral, in frantic effort to keep back one of my egg-laying displays. I thanked goodness for the only consoling feature in the situation, that Arthur as usual in the sermon was quietly asleep. Stealing a glance at him sideways to make sure of this, I heard him mutter,

'If he says it again I shan't believe it.'

This finished me. Resorting to my last line of defence I dropped my handkerchief, and under cover of picking it up I stuffed it into my mouth and shook as noiselessly as Tony Weller. As I rose I heard to my relief of the demise of Enoch: 'He wass not, for Godd took him.'

Fortunately my behaviour had not been noticed by Mrs. Hughes, whose whole attention had been devoted to 'those ill-mannered English boys who were laughing all through the sermon'. I had better luck in this way than a well-known scientist (I think it was Huxley) whose friend took him to a Welsh church when they were on holiday. As distinguished visitors they were shown into a front pew. In full career of his sermon the preacher suddenly stopped and pointed at them.

'Ye come to the house of God, and ye *smile*,' said he, and then added menacingly, 'but there'll be no smiling in Hell.'

I wish I could reproduce in writing the fervent accents of another sermon, which was described to me by one of Arthur's Welsh friends. The preacher took for his theme the morals that could be drawn from the characteristics of certain animals. Of these my informant could remember only two, the elephant and the peacock, which went like this:

'The elephant, my brethren, has but one bone in the *whole* of his boddy. This bone, my brethren, is situated in the *smaal* of his back. Now the pekkularitee of the elephant, my brethren, is this, that if the poor animal sits down, without help he cannot get up again. Once there was a poor elephant who sat down. There, my brethren, he sat. Presently there came by a kind gentleman. Now that kind gentleman, my brethren, helped that poor elephant to his feet. Ever afterwards, wherever that kind gentleman went, that elephant followed him! *So*, my brethren, we may see the Power and the Effects of *LOV*.'

The moral of the peacock ran thus: 'The pekkularitee in the flesh of the peacock is this, my brethren, that the longer you boil him the rawer he gets. *So*, my brethren, it is with the hypocrite.' No further explanation followed, and the connexion between hypocrisy and being underdone remained impressively mysterious.

Such intellectual refinements were mainly confined to the established Church. The nonconformists of Wales as well as Cornwall were simpler in their addresses, which were frequently given by 'local preachers' in the country districts. These were earnest working-men who knew their Bible and

the needs of the congregation. Arthur told me that when he was a boy he used to go to hear them for the sake of trying to discover what the trade of the preacher was, by watching his gestures. A carpenter would saw the air, a blacksmith would thump down hammer-strokes on the pulpit, a cobbler would draw out his arms slowly sideways as though striving with the leather. This seemed to me a pleasing thing, as if the man had developed his ideas as he went about his daily routine, and I wondered whether St. Paul borrowed a gesture from his tent-making, or St. Peter from his fishing.

Wales differed from Cornwall considerably on the Church and Chapel question. Since the days of Wesley the Cornish, so I gathered from my mother, were quite tolerant in the matter, many of them attending church in the morning from ancient habit, and chapel in the evening to get a little religious excitement. No enmity existed between the two persuasions, the fundamental reason being, I fancy, that Cornwall has always been pagan at heart.

In Wales it was far otherwise. Ill-feeling, often virulent, seemed to exist between Church and Chapel, as though they were entirely different religions. The latter was not simply Wesleyanism, but had many shades of belief or behaviour, and suffered from internecine warfare. Wherever two or three cottages were gathered together there would spring up almost as many chapels—Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Calvinistic Methodist—all of them too ugly to be borne. And the congregations were united only in their dislike of the Church. The chief battle-ground was the village school. Chapel people had to send their children to the Church school because there was no other, and vented their spleen by pin-prick persecutions, such as complaints of inefficient teaching, lack of equipment, and so on. The young schoolmaster at Aberdovey lived next to us, and told us how miserable they made his life and how they hindered his work, which he had to carry on without any assistant.

Although Arthur raged against this kind of thing and against nonconformists in general, he was greatly attached to a few

individuals among them, who had been friends of his boyhood. Among these was John Owen, who had now become a widely respected minister in Mold. It chanced that he was invited to preach one Sunday at Towyn, and as a matter of course came to spend all his spare time with us at Aberdovey. He was a cultivated, keen-brained man, and I am sure that he found Arthur a stimulating companion. I went with them on their walks and can still recall some of the arguments. Accustomed to speaking Welsh almost entirely John pronounced English with the elegant precision of a foreigner, and it charmed me to listen to their heated discussions on religion and politics, on no single point of which did they agree. Home Rule was the burning topic of the day. Arthur was a rabid Unionist, and John thought it best for a country to govern itself, even if it made the wildest mistakes in the process. Good government, like all other good things, he maintained, was no good if imposed upon you, for all real education must come from within. On this point Arthur was inclined to admit that he might be right, but on questions of religion John was badly worsted, and I was sure that he would like to have conceded far more points than he dared. Now and again he would invite me to give an opinion, and after a while he went the length of complimenting Arthur on his choice of a wife.

'Oh, she's all right,' said Arthur, 'she's got some common sense.'

At this John told us of the old Welsh farmer who used to say to his son, 'My boy, when you are thinking of getting married, there are three things to be desired in a girl: money, the grace of God, and common sense. As for money, never mind—it may come; as for the grace of God, never mind—it may come; but if she hasn't got common sense, don't marry her, for it'll never come.'

Then John added that there was another point that he himself would consider an essential, and I was afraid that he was going to elaborate something akin to the grace of God, in which I knew myself to be deficient. But no; to our great satisfaction his idea of the *sine qua non* for married life was a

sense of humour. This he held to be a kind of 'fourth dimension', and unless both husband and wife lived in it they could not be married in the fullest meaning of the term.

On the Saturday evening when the lamp was lit and the curtains drawn after supper, Arthur settled down to further argument, and John drew forth a pipe.

'Hullo!' said I. 'I didn't know you smoked; all the time we were out you never once lit up.'

Then the dreadful truth came out that he did not dare to be seen smoking, and until the curtain was drawn he was afraid that a passer-by might let some member of his flock know of his sinfulness; for his particular brand of religion disapproved of *any* fleshly indulgence in their minister. We were too profoundly sorry for him to make any remark on this. He was obviously cheered by Arthur's promising to go over to Towyn to hear him preach on the Sunday evening. One good listener made all the difference to a preacher, he said.

Mrs. Hughes would not have been seen in a chapel at any price, but I had no such scruples and went off happily with Arthur and John to Towyn.

'You may find it rather tiresome to sit through the whole thing in Welsh,' said John as we paced along, 'but I'll do what I always do when I know there is an English stranger in the congregation, I'll put in one prayer in English.'

'How jolly it must be,' said I, 'to be able to turn from one language to another like that. Very effective sometimes, surely?'

John laughed and told me the story of the Welsh preacher in an English country church who said in the middle of his sermon, 'How far more impressive is this passage in the original Hebrew. Listen.' He then rolled out in his richest Welsh tones, 'If there is a Welshman present will he kindly keep it to himself that I am talking Welsh and not Hebrew.' In such a way, John admitted, a second language could be very impressive.

This anecdote put an idea into my head. We reached the ugly little chapel up a side street of Towyn, and it was already

fairly crowded when Arthur and I took our seats, and John disappeared behind somewhere. When he began to preach my idea took shape. His face was a fine one, inspiring in itself. His voice, rising and falling as he warmed to his theme, had a magnetic influence on his congregation. Since I had no notion what he was talking about my idea of imagining it to be the Sermon on the Mount was easy to carry out. I pictured its first delivery in Aramaic, to the eager people on the hill-side. When the congregation sat up a little in their interested attention, or one gave a sympathetic groan, I imagined that they had just been startled by the injunction to hit a man back good and hard by offering the other cheek.

Instead of being bored I was sorry when the sermon came to an end. Then some prayers 'from the bosom' followed, and right in the midst of them fell on my entranced ears my favourite collect 'Lighten our darkness'. Although I had heard these words countless times, with what a fresh beauty they struck me in those strange surroundings, and my heart warmed to John for his kindness. Then came a hymn sung to the tune *Hyfrydol*. Any one who has not heard a Welsh non-conformist gathering sing a hymn has really no idea what a hymn should be. All the world's sorrows and all the triumphs of religion are in it, and you feel ready to face anything.

*Under Roseberry Topping*

## § I

THE following winter brought a holiday that was a contrast to the Welsh one. Mother and I were invited to go north again, to spend the Christmas with Tom. We were glad to get away for a week or two, not only to escape from the decorum of the boarding-house, but also from London itself. For a cloud had been hanging over the town—a mental one in addition to the customary fogs. After the lapse of over forty years Jack the Ripper has become as legendary as Dick Turpin, and to many he is almost a joke. No one can now believe how terrified and unbalanced we all were by his murders. A thriller in a book is quite different from a thriller round the corner. It seemed to be round the corner, although it all happened in the East End, and we were in the West; but even so, I was afraid to go out after dark, if only to post a letter. Just as dusk came on we used to hear down our quiet and ultra-respectable Edith Road the cries of newspaper-boys, in tones made as alarming as they could: 'Another 'orrible murder! . . . Whitechapel! . . . Murder! . . . Disgustin' details. . . . Murder!' One can only dimly imagine what the terror must have been in those acres of narrow streets, where the inhabitants knew the murderer to be lurking. John Tenniel departed from his usual political subjects for *Punch* in order to stir public opinion by blood-curdling cartoons of 'murder stalking the slums', and by jeers at the inefficiency of the police. From all the suburban districts police were hurried to the East End, and yet we would read of a murder committed within a few moments of the passing by of a policeman. Naturally, I suppose, the murderer knew the time of the policeman's beat, and waited till he had passed. Some sensible fellow thought of making the police more stealthy by putting india-rubber on their heels; and it

was this that started the widespread use of rubber-heels by the public at large. Another strange by-product of the crimes was the disuse of black-bags for the ordinary professional or business man. A suspect had been described as 'carrying a black bag', and no one cared to be seen with one, not from fear of arrest, but simply from the ugly association—a curious instance of the whimsical way in which trade can suffer from a sudden drop in demand. The press was full of theories about the murderer. One idea was that he must be a sailor, because he could join his ship and get away quickly; another was that he must be a madman, because he hid so cunningly (though why this ability should be a sign of mental derangement I could never see); another strong suspicion was that he must be a doctor, because of the skill and rapidity with which the mutilations were performed, and also because of the uncanny disappearance of the man in a few seconds after the deed, for a doctor carrying a black bag of instruments was a familiar figure anywhere at all hours, and might easily masquerade as a passer-by and natural first-aider. Horrible though the murders themselves were, I think it was more the mysterious disappearances that affected people's minds, giving a quality of the supernatural to the work—declared, of course, by some to be a judgement on vice. The murders stopped completely after one of surpassing savagery, looking as if an avenger had been seeking a special victim and had found her at last.

## § 2

We found Tom in far pleasanter conditions than when we were in Darlington. He had moved out of Middlesbrough, a short train-run to the lovely little village of Ayton. Here he had bought a small house with a chicken-run and a quarter of an acre of garden. As he explained to me, any fraction of an acre always sounds 'landed'. In addition to the baby we had first seen in our few visits from Darlington, he had now a second son, not quite a year old. They had moved into the new home in time for him to be 'born at the foot of Roseberry



Topping'—the hall-mark of a true Yorkshireman. Following the approved custom of babies he arrived at what an old servant of ours used to call an 'ill-convenient' time—when they were so lately settled into the house that they hardly knew where anything was, in the middle of the night, with neither doctor nor nurse at hand. Tom was quite unperturbed, and became, as he described it, the sole officiating priest.

The elder boy was at the ravishing age of two and a bit, able to talk in his own fashion in a most companionable way. We had hardly arrived before he managed to ask me where I got my eggs. 'From a shop in Kensington,' I said. '*Ours*,' he solemnly confided, 'are *laid*.' What he lusted after was to be among those present at every doing, preferably in kitchen or garden, and especially to hang about mother, whom he called 'Gamble', the nearest he could get to 'Grannie'. She liked this name, and it stuck to her. He found 'Molly' easy to pronounce, and gave me no respectful prefix. I was his willing slave through most of his waking hours, which began far too soon for my liking. He slept in a cot in my room, and every morning about 6.30 he would wake, creep into my bed and demand a story. I would pretend to be sound asleep. He would then say 'Molly way *cup*' in ever louder tones, varied with 'Once a pinny time' (a kind of imitative magic). At last in despair he would wail forth 'Molly goes to sleep *all* day long'. At this I could never help laughing, and then had to surrender and produce some kind of story till 8.

Tom was amused at my devotion, and said I was practising for the future, adding cheerfully, 'It'll be a long time before you have a child as big as that, though'. He said I must be sure to have a little girl, for there were boys enough in the family already. I didn't tell him that my great ambition was to have a son. Secretly I went farther and hoped for three sons and one daughter—which turned out to be exactly what came to me.

It was a mild and open winter, so that we were able to do gardening, walking, and sketching nearly every day. One superb morning Tom asked me if I were game for a walk with him round the Topping. I was eager enough, for a walk alone

with one of my brothers was always one of the special pleasures of life. The mere invitation was a pleasure, for it was certain they would not ask me if they didn't want me. And with a brother there is always the understood and unexpressed background, the old family life and jokes and relations and friends that need but the slightest allusion to come in and enrich the conversation. In fact it was the conversation on that walk that sticks in my memory rather than the details of that Yorkshire landscape which acted as a kind of *obligato*. On a walk, too, you can be far less reticent than in a room, for you do not eye one another, and the least object of the wayside can be used to interrupt any too-deep train of thought.

Tom and I had a great deal in common now, and I got indirectly from him better hints on teaching that I had ever met with in a book. His ideal of discipline would certainly never enter any treatise on education, and yet I am sure it is sound: 'Be a devil in class, and a good fellow outside it.' 'Is that really the whole of it?' I asked. 'Pretty well,' he said. 'You see, boys like to be ruled, and to be made to do the very stiffest work they can. These modern ideas of luring them to work are rotten. It's quite interesting enough in itself, without all the fuss of "leading up" and "drawing forth". Our Geography man told me that one day an inspector essayed to "take the boys for a bit", and began genially with some "interesting" questions. The boys' guesses flummoxed him, for he didn't know enough geography to say whether they were right or wrong—and looked pretty ridiculous.'

'Did he come into your class, Tom?'

'No, I only saw him passing through the hall. A month or two later I met a man in a train and discovered in chatting to him that he was a school-inspector, so I naturally regaled him with our Geography incident, as an example of the merriment that some inspectors provide. But he saw nothing funny in it at all, and got out at the next station; and then I realized that it was the identical man!'

'I suppose the moral of that is—don't talk in railway carriages?'

'Not at all. It's always a good thing to have a chat with a stranger, for even the smallest boy or the biggest duffer will be sure to provide you with a new idea or something funny.'

'You are always on the look-out for the funny side of things, Tom. Are you by any chance ever low-spirited?'

He laughed. 'Odd that you should have asked me that now, for it was on this very road that I really was miserable once, and not long ago. We had a Middlesbrough man to stay the week-end with us, to show him our new house. The Saturday was ghastly weather—murky, damp, depressing fog, and we could settle to nothing. So Nell, to get us out of the way, suggested that we should go for a "nice long walk". So we set our teeth and started along this road, with a distant inn for lunch in our mind's eye. The fog grew a little less, and we were warmed with our walk and pleasantly hungry when we reached the inn. We sat in the little parlour for some time before any one appeared. At last the barman came in with a "Cold ham, Sir? Yes, Sir," and a jerky attempt to arrange plates and glasses. We had barely put in a mouthful when he said to me in a confidential undertone, "You'll excuse us being a bit upset-like, Sir, the landlord has just died upstairs."'

'And then you went home to have a good laugh, and find everything jolly by comparison?'

'Yes, and so you can blow away most troubles.' After we had paced along in silence for a bit my mind went back to school life and I asked Tom whether his boys were as a rule responsive.

'Fairly well,' said he, and then added: 'When I look round at the boys in my class, some lazy, some blockheads, a few promising—just all sorts—I sometimes picture to myself the old scribe who was in charge of the synagogue school at Nazareth. I can see the dozen or so small boys squatted at his feet, spelling out their rolls, or more likely having to learn by heart the passages he declaimed to them—long bits of Isaiah and perhaps a psalm now and again as a treat. I expect there were blockheads and lazy boys there too, and one dreamy little chap who would ask tiresome questions that the old fellow

couldn't answer. "Wait till you are old enough to go up to Jerusalem, my boy, they will be able to tell you everything up there."

'And he found when he did get there,' said I, 'that he didn't get half so much as he got from the queer and disreputable people he met casually—"in the train" as you would say.'

'That's just what I say,' said Tom, 'we fools feed the mighty ones . . . there's no waste.'

### § 3

That walk and talk were the more memorable because Tom was seldom to be caught in a serious mood; no doubt it was the rarity of our being alone together that induced it. General conversation is quite another matter; at that he was always felicitous. The family took special delight in his power of repartee, and we treasured many an instance of an enemy discomfited by it. But, family-like, we treasured still more the occasions when he failed. Once he was worsted by a very small newspaper-boy; it was the evening after a disappointing cricket match at Castleton, and a late edition of the local gazette was thrust towards him with 'Paper, Sir? Cricket results, Sir.' 'No,' said Tom a little testily as he turned away. 'Ah!' shouted the urchin after him, 'I sees tha got a doock.'

It was a sore point, for Tom was a leader in the cricket world, and on another occasion was quite ready with his reply to impudence. A bouncing captain of a visiting team was irritating every one by laying down the law, and exclaimed to Tom who disagreed on some point, 'Why, any novice knows that!' 'But, thank heaven,' replied Tom, 'we are not *all* novices.'

His wife was by no means slow-witted, but she had a capacity for inconsequence that amounted to a talent; and sometimes this oddity was awkward. At the end of a short excursion to see us in Kensington, Tom arranged to meet her for their journey north by the midnight train. 'Mind, Nell, King's Cross main departure platform, under the clock.' This clock was Tom's favourite trysting-place, and she knew it well. He

arrived in good time, but there was no sign of her. Expecting to see her rushing up he stood waiting till the train started, and then wandered about in search of her, to find her pacing up and down among the cabs outside. She explained by saying that she thought she would make *sure* of his coming in time by going to meet him. The result was that they had to sacrifice their cheap tickets and pay full fare for the next train. We used to wonder how Tom could be so patient with her. But he was not patient. By some blessed alchemy he turned even her blunders into amusement, and sucked quite the money's worth of the ticket out of the situation. He used to say that the world would be a much duller place without Nell. She was a jolly, companionable soul, never heavy-going, and as her boys grew older they encouraged and treasured her absurdities. The younger one had been out for a long walk by himself one day and made her anxious. 'Where have you been all this time, you naughty boy?' was her greeting. 'Only for a walk, mother.' 'Then it's the last walk you take in this world, my boy.' Her anxiety was genuine, although it took such a curious mode of expression. Once she said to me, 'I can't think what I should do, Molly, if Tom were to die, or do something ugly of that kind.' Occasionally she took a leaf out of Tom's book and made a little drama out of a contretemps. One day during our holiday Tom had to go into Middlesbrough, and was not to return till supper-time. So Nelly and Gamble and I arranged to put off our midday dinner, and turn it into a hot supper for him to share on his return. We plotted roast veal and the usual accompaniments. Unfortunately the butcher didn't come, and when we went round to his little shop in the village we found it closed, and indeed all the other shops, because there was a funeral. Nelly fretted a great deal at the lack of a joint, so that Gamble and I were relieved when a telegram came to say that Tom was staying to supper with a friend and would be late. We had eggs and went to bed. All was serene. But the next morning Nell could not cease talking of her annoyance at Tom's absence from supper, of the trouble we had all been at, in order to make it a really grand supper, of our disappoint-

ment that he should miss it, and so on. Gamble and I were laughing, but she grew more and more eloquent till at last Tom said:

‘Well, let’s hear what this wonderful supper actually was.’

‘As it actually turned out, dear, there wasn’t any supper at all, because the butcher was shut, and being buried.’

Tom was quite capable of trying return tricks on her, and one morning he alarmed us all by coming into the kitchen where we were busy over dinner preparations, to announce, ‘I’ve got the plague!’ Holding himself as though in agony, he added, ‘I’ve got a pain in the groin, and that’s one of the early symptoms.’ The word ‘groin’ made us laugh, and the joke was over when he explained that he had been reading the *Journal of the Plague*. But he told me later on that it was not entirely a joke, for Defoe’s writing was so vivid that it really did start an imaginary pain. He thought that most illnesses were spread by the pleasure people take in describing their symptoms.

‘You have never been ill in your life, have you?’

‘Never. Not even toothache. Nor Nell. We choke one another off if we see any likelihood of giving way. I’ll show you this evening.’

At supper, accordingly, Tom breezed in with ‘Feeling a bit tired, Nell?’

‘Yes, dear, I’ve got a little headache, but it’s nothing to speak of.’

‘Then,’ said Tom, ‘why speak of it?’

Nell laughed happily, and I thanked heaven I was not in a home where a kind and thoughtful husband would have prescribed lying down, fetched eau-de-Cologne and petted his wife into a real headache.

Supper was usually the jolliest meal of the day. The little boys were safe in bed, and could get into no more danger or mischief, so Nell was at peace. Gamble and I were flushed with our triumphs in getting them there. While I dealt faithfully with Viv, Gamble was allowed to bath baby Llew. Gamble was sketchy in everything she did, and I believe Nell

and Nelly were reading or sewing. Nelly's complete ignorance of anything remotely learned was a source of open amusement to us and even herself. But one evening while we were deep in some Greek, Tom looked up and muttered, 'By the way, who *was* the father of Calypso?'

'Why Atlas, of course, Tom dear,' came from Nelly without looking up from her knitting.

'Oh yes, that's right,' said Tom, and then exclaimed in sudden amazement, 'but how on earth did you come to know that?'

'Why, of course, we were taught mythology at school.'

So far as we could judge that was the only subject she had seriously studied. She had probably used a text-book like one I found in the book-case at Reskadinnick—a fascinating little volume some four inches by three, with copious illustrations and lively details of the gods and goddesses. Nelly had been born and brought up in Brighton, and her school must have been one of those finishing academies against which Miss Buss fought so hard. Her ignorance of Nature and the ordinary affairs of life was almost past relief. Little Viv ran in one day calling out excitedly, 'Moon! Moon! Come see, moon,' for I had just pointed it out to him.

'Nonsense, dear,' said his mother without stirring, 'it can't be the moon in the daytime; the moon shines only at night.'

Nelly never opened a newspaper, and when Tom was reading us an account of a burglary and the shooting of a man by the burglars, she broke in with, 'Well, I never! I had no notion that burglars were allowed to carry firearms.' Another day apropos of some trouble at sea that was recorded, she meditated aloud on the difficulties of a sailor's life, and wondered how people found their way about on the ocean.

'It's fairly easy,' said Tom, 'there are regular lines that they follow.'

'How funny,' replied Nelly, 'to think of the number of times I've been out on the sea at Brighton, and I never noticed them!'

In early days Tom had been optimistic enough to get her

to try some good books, and hoped for the best with his own favourite *Vanity Fair*. But she put it aside as 'not quite nice'. Wondering what she could have comprehended so rapidly, he asked her to explain.

'Thackeray uses such bad language.'

More mystified still Tom asked to be shown the passage, and she replied that every time a regiment was mentioned it had '—th' in front of it.

Novels of a simpler kind, however, made a great appeal to her, and she always had one on hand, though it was a matter of speculation to us what she got from it. Like most mothers she was continually interrupted by some one at the door, a cry from one of the children, or the need to look in the oven. Stuffing her handkerchief into her novel to keep the place, she would slip out. Tom's delight was to shift the handkerchief some distance forwards or backwards and wait for Nelly's reaction to it on her return. If the shift had been forwards it made no difference at all, and she would placidly go on from the fresh place; but if the shift had been backwards she would occasionally complain, 'How this man does repeat himself!'

News came one day that there was a theatrical company in Middlesbrough, and that *Hamlet* was to be played. There were no second thoughts about it—we must go. There was no great expense; as well as I remember the fares on the little railway branch line came to as much as our four stalls. Scenery and properties were of the crudest—pillars waving in the breeze, the ghost grotesquely attired, the by-play all folding of arms and strutting about. But—it was *Hamlet*, and what more does man require? A little before the end Tom passed the word along that we must go or we should lose the last train home. We had plenty to discuss on the way, not about the production so much as the rapt attention of the audience and the eternal pull of the play itself. Tom said how amazed he had always been by Shakespeare's knowledge of madness—the real in *Lear*, the assumed in *Hamlet* and *Edgar*, the peculiar mental twists of a young and innocent girl in *Ophelia*—all



seeming to point to intimate medical lore. While Gamble and Tom and I were going at these points Nelly wore a peevish air.

‘What’s the matter, Nell?’ said Tom at last.

‘It’s too bad,’ said she, ‘to have come away like this before the end. I did so want to know which won that fencing match.’

That was the only large-scale outing we had. Our regular dissipation of an evening after 9 o’clock was a game of tiddly-winks. We four sat round the table with a small wooden cup in the middle; into this we flipped coloured counters in turn, and the one who flipped all his counters in first took the cupful. The counters were a penny the dozen, and one or other of us would sometimes go to bed the richer by as much as eight-pence. It was absurd, but we developed quite a technique, and Gamble got as excited as anybody, especially if one of us in our zeal played out of turn. She said to me she had seldom enjoyed a holiday more, or had such a brainless one.

This remark was made when we were back again in Kensington. And my reply was that it seemed a pity that a man of Tom’s mental capacity should spend hours in such a game as tiddly-winks.

‘Well, there was a time when I should have felt the same. What ambitions I had for him! From his very birth. I remember how his father and I were almost alarmed at the responsibility of being trusted with the care of an immortal soul. And as he grew strong and clever we imagined a great future for him. But I have come to see that greatness is all nonsense. Just ask yourself—what better thing could he be doing than making a happy home for his own family, and putting manly ideas into the heads of all those Middlesbrough boys in the school? Even if he had become a headmaster, as we so often hoped, he would have done no better work—probably much less. And as for tiddly-winks—a game is a game. A solemn game of chess looks well, but doesn’t create the uproarious fun and relaxation we had together over our ridiculous coloured counters. I used to say to myself as I watched Tom’s

fervour in grabbing them, 'A great mind engaged in trifles is like the sun when setting; it pleases more while it dazzles less.'

'Mother!' said I, 'where did you get such an elegant sentiment? Don't say you made it up!'

'No dear; when I was a little girl at school in Falmouth, where they taught very little indeed, they made a great point of Penmanship, and I had to copy this sentence out with such frequency, such pains, such flourishes, that I could never forget it.'

## XIV

### *Easter at Elstow, 1890*

#### § 1

THE last of the eighties was a patchwork of bright-coloured streaks on a drab background. No doubt the jolly times were all the jollier in contrast with that cramping boarding-house existence. But mother and I were always plotting a get-away. I worked harder than ever at my books for the B.A., expecting with any luck to get my degree in '90. With this I could look out for a better post, and we two would be able to live together, no matter where. I had great hopes of doing some work in the training of teachers, for even while I was in Darlington Miss Hughes had written to say that she intended to have me eventually as her vice-principal at Cambridge. So with this rosy prospect we put off our escape from the boarding-house. Mother suffered far more from it than I did, for she could only get away by long walks, while I was thoroughly enjoying the work at school. Few teachers can have had such a fine set of pupils as fell to my lot just then. Among them were the three sisters who had been the nucleus of the school when it started. Their mother had been kind enough to call on us in our 'greengrocer days', and the whole family gradually became our close and life-long friends. The visits of Mrs. Sergeant to mother therefore became one of our chief assets. She had two sons at St. Paul's, her husband was a leading journalist, and the whole household was ultra-intellectual, with literary people of the day continually dropping in on them. Mr. Sergeant I liked best of all, chiefly because he and Arthur got on so well, smoking together over their politics or chess. At the latter I was rejoiced to see Arthur badly beaten. He said that his defeat was owing to Mr. Sergeant's large board, but that excuse hardly held good for long. Mr. Sergeant had to be careful, but his eldest son, Philip (now a well-known

authority on the game), could beat Arthur without being even careful. Mrs. Sergeant reviewed the novels for her husband's paper, and always had one in hand. This seemed to me delightful, but on my eager inquiries she could never say what it was about. 'They are all about the same,' she burst out one day, 'and the very sight of a novel makes me feel queer.'

Arthur and I managed to get a good deal of common life by reading worth-while books, noting passages and comparing these notes during his fortnightly visits. A few of these I recall were *Amiel's Journal*, *The Egoist*, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (Mrs. Sergeant had recommended Kipling to us as a promising young writer), and above all others the *Letters of Dorothy Osborne*. Browning we had somehow discarded, but we were never tired of Keats, whose *Eve of St. Agnes* we knew almost by heart, haunted by the mysterious fulfilment in the lines:

*And they are gone; ay, ages long ago,  
These lovers fled away into the storm.*

Books we never could resist buying, but we made a solemn agreement never to waste our hard-earned money on mere 'presents' to each other. However, I felt that it would be within the rules if a present were *made*, and in this mother backed me up. Arthur's cover for his cherished violin was a disgracefully old and shabby black silk handkerchief, that had belonged to his father (and probably his grandfather!). It was dropping to pieces. So I conceived the idea of making him a new one. If he had but known it, I could give no greater proof of my devotion than to face a needle for his sake. The hours of consultation that mother and I spent on that cover during our walks and 'between times'! At last we agreed on silk and fine wool for material and old rose for colour. All by myself, but with mother abetting, I contrived to join the silk to its lining and to work an initial *A* in one corner. Arthur was full of admiration on receiving it. But the next time his fiddle appeared, lo! the same old black handkerchief. I forbore any comment, thinking horribly of Dora Copperfield's activities. I also reflected on the superiority of a brother to a lover,

as a critic. Each one of my four brothers would have said to such a present—‘Coosh’.

An ever-welcome visitor in any circumstances of joy or sorrow, dullness or excitement, was Mary Wood. She certainly typified the ‘modern girl’ of that time, tame though it must seem to one of to-day. She had been long before this one of the first women to ride a bicycle, to go on the top of a bus, and to indulge in mixed bathing. But her companions in these excesses were always of the kind that would be called to-day ‘highbrow’. As the boarding-house atmosphere was no fun, she and I used an occasional lecture or an educational meeting as an excuse for an evening together. This was definitely for fun, with no alloy of desire for mental improvement. What we liked best was the acrimony with which the followers of Pestalozzi and Froebel would attack one another, each maintaining that his particular idol was the real originator of some world-shaking method of teaching. Wherever we happened to be there was sure to be found one particular man, a well-known educational enthusiast. He was a secretary of some Guild or Circle that met in Gower Street and wore the worried look of one whose main objects are good attendances, ‘fruitful’ discussions, and subscriptions paid up. But these were not quite all his objects, as it turned out. He would sit by Mary and me, and urge us by word and look to keep the discussion going. This we did light-heartedly, being happily ignorant of the subject, and totally indifferent as to the issue. One night he astonished me by asking if he might see me home. Me! an old Londoner! to be seen home! ‘Thank you,’ said I, ‘but I can get a bus all the way from Gower Street to Kensington, and there are no real dangers on the route.’ But no protests would keep him off, and there stood Mary suppressing her laughter. Too enraged to laugh or be even decently polite, I gave the curtest answers to all his queries during that bus-ride about ‘your friend, Miss Wood’. How mother laughed when I regaled her with this incident on my return.

‘Why, he’s in love with Mary of course.’

‘Nonsense, mother, if so, why didn’t he see *her* home?’

'My dear, you don't understand the oddities of a man's adoration. Mary was too unapproachable, and you were the next best thing. "Je ne suis pas la rose, mais j'ai vécu auprès d'elle".'

'What a silly! Anyhow, I could have told him that he hasn't the ghost of a chance.'

Mother and I were both correct. He was foolish enough to propose to Mary by letter, and got the reply such a poor-spirited approach deserves.

A gay interlude for mother and me was a visit from Tom. Whatever the occasion he managed to spread gaiety about, even in the present case, which does not sound cheerful. He came up for his M.A. London degree, a matter in those days not of a thesis merely but of a stiff examination. He made it the excuse for a jolly little dinner or theatre every evening for mother and me, to keep his brain fresh, as he argued. I was awe-struck by his papers. In one of the Latin ones he said he had done all except one piece of translation.

'Why did you leave that out?' I asked.

'Couldn't do it.'

'Nonsense, Tom, it looks quite possible. Why even I can make out the general hang of it.'

'Yes, so could I . . . all but one word that beat me.'

'But you could have put a blank.'

'No. Blanks aren't done. They are like mother's idea about a darn—confessed poverty. But to leave out a whole passage suggests an accident, that you misread the instructions or something, and that you could do it as perfectly as your first bit if necessary. No sensible examiner is going to reject a good man for that, but imperfect work in Latin is disgusting. So I pulled my ready-loaded pipe out of my pocket and sauntered out of the examination room an hour before the time, to the pitying astonishment of the other fellows.'

'If you are so sensitive about bad Latin,' said I, 'you must suffer a good deal over your boys' mistakes.'

'Not a bit. The boys have got to do perfect work. It's just as easy to be absolutely correct in Latin as in mathematics.'

You don't say about some problem in algebra that bits of an equation are quite nicely done—the thing is either right or wrong.'

'But surely your boys make pardonable mistakes?'

'Oh yes, careless ones, but they get no mark for a sentence unless it is absolutely perfect, order and all, without alterations.'

'Don't they grumble, when it is a tiny slip in a long sentence, and they have corrected it tidily?'

'No, because I get them used to this rule from the very first, and it makes them jolly careful, and able to hold a sentence in their head before they start to write it. Of course, I allow any variety of renderings, if good.'

Fired by this, I began the plan at once with my group of stalwart pupils. I explained the idea, and they leapt to it with enthusiasm. A by-product of the new régime was an improvement in Violet Gask's handwriting, for if a word were illegible the sentence had no mark.

I told Tom that I wished I could see him at work with his Sixth Form. He admitted that they had a good time, and were a sort of star turn for any visitor to the school. One day he was taking them in Livy when the door was flung wide, and there stood the headmaster heralding the approach of none other than the Archbishop of York, who had dropped in to have a look at one of the leading schools in his diocese, and expressed himself specially interested in what was being done in Classics.

'Ah, Livy, I see. I should like to take the boys for a little,' said he, all geniality and condescension.

To the horror of the headmaster, who was standing behind in a lather of inferiority, Tom replied as he handed the book:

'Oh, certainly, but I think your Grace may find it a bit beyond you.'

The book was taken with a touch of surprise and hauteur, and a boy was put on to translate. All went swimmingly for a sentence or two, and then the boy stuck, for it was Livy in one of his tougher moods. With a hearty laugh the Archbishop returned the book to Tom:

'Carry on, Mr. Thomas. You were quite right. It's beyond me. My Latin is not what it was.'

As he retreated he asked Tom to come and have lunch with him at his hotel, only too pleased, no doubt, to find some one who didn't toady to him. It was an enjoyable lunch, with exchange of yarns on old public-school ways, and Tom told us how he had amused his host with descriptions of the sermons he had sat under at Ayton. One had been devoted to the doctrine of the Trinity; the vicar described at some length his visit to Switzerland, 'and there before me, at the end of the valley, stood those lovely mountains, Jungfrau, Monch, and Eiger—to my mind, a proof of the Trinity!'

'If he had shifted a little farther along he could have proved a fourth. That is nearly as foolish as a "proof" of the Trinity offered to his congregation by one of my young vicars. He placed on the edge of his pulpit (so I am credibly informed) three tumblers of water, and explained quite fully that the water was the same although the vessels were different. I hope, Mr. Thomas, that you follow the reasoning? This proved that it was the same God in three different persons.'

'Our man at Ayton,' said Tom, 'could beat him at vivid presentation. In his view one Sunday we were all too apathetic and lukewarm—Laodiceans. In his mind's eye he saw a long train of carriages standing motionless on the railway, because the engine had become uncoupled. He saw the people sitting quite unconcerned, some eating, some playing cards, some chatting, and some (alas) even laughing. But they could not move! "Now to my mind," he added, "that engine is God."'

'How do you manage to keep from laughing?'

'Oh, well, I suffer fools gladly; and even such queer history as a reference to David's worshipping in the Temple of his fathers adds a bit to one's gaiety, but when he said that Jerusalem was destroyed in 68 I nearly got up in my pew and protested. After all, ideas about extending the Trinity may differ, but dates are sacred things, aren't they, Sir?'

This little episode, and many another in which Tom showed himself quite unperturbed by 'important' people, aroused the



jealousy of the headmaster; and this was greatly increased when Tom took his M.A., for the headmaster was only a B.A. However, his M.A. was one great advantage to Tom, for thenceforth his work was almost entirely confined to Classics. In earlier years he had been obliged to teach uncongenial subjects, simply because there was no one else in Middlesbrough who could do them at all. The following is taken from a letter to me in '87:

*I am working very hard this term. The headmaster said the other day, 'Oh! Mr. Thomas, you'll coach those boys in the higher parts of Trigonometry, De Moivre's Theorem and so on, won't you? You're fresher at it than I am.' Oh, yes, of course, I am indeed fresher at it. But what man has done man can do. And if De Moivre can imagine  $\sqrt{-1}$ , I can bring myself to treat it in the familiar spirit required by the Journal of Education. My conic sections man, too, is becoming a burden; he has got on to the parabola. He generally has a week's illness after a violent leap upward like that, so I have time to read up ahead.*

Good old Tom! He taught in that school for over forty years, and when the age for retirement came, he told me that he hated giving up the job, and knew that he was far more capable of a good day's work than the younger fellows.

## § 2

In the summer we naturally fled to Cornwall as soon as my school-term was over. My uncle Joe invited Arthur down, too, and Dym came from Plymouth for a week or two, so it was a jolly holiday. My cousins used to say that they liked 'Aunt Mary' to be staying with them, because she added to the fun and didn't reprove them for their follies. While she indulged her passion for sketching, Dym and Arthur had as many days' fishing as they could manage, and the rest of us either accompanied them in the background or went off for tramps along the cliffs. Long expeditions were now beyond our means, but I had always been anxious to see Falmouth, which had held a glamour for me since childhood. So Arthur and I

plotted to go by train and have a long day there. We took my cousin Alice with us, a girl of about fifteen, and for all three it was a red-letter day, spent in exploring the defences of the harbour, the shipping, the tempting old curiosity shops (in one of which I had some trouble to restrain Arthur from buying a ravishing tea-service 'for when we are married') and in eating strange meals as cheaply as we could.

I mention this day's outing, not on account of anything special that happened, but because of Alice's happy face throughout. I am certain that never for one moment did she feel herself an awkward 'third'. Arthur and I hated being obviously left alone together, and behaved so little like the traditional engaged couple that no one bothered about us. I think it was only Tony and mother and Dym who understood us in this way, and realized how much we managed to communicate in the midst of the crowded and jolly family life. It was not till long years afterwards that I came across some lines of Blake's that sum up for me the whole of my life with Arthur:

*He who bends to himself a joy  
Doth the wingèd life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.*

When mother and I got back to Kensington we sucked a good deal of amusement from the remarks that had been made in Cornwall about the engagement. 'A very tame affair.' 'They are not at all suited to one another—Arthur so grave and Molly so light-hearted.' 'Of course, it will never come to anything.' 'Reading for the Bar indeed! It will be years before he can marry, and Molly will soon be tired of waiting.' Mother had met all such remarks with variations of 'Quite, indeed, yes, how true, but after all they must use their own judgements, mustn't they? You and I are not called upon to marry Arthur, are we?'

A more direct attack was made upon me. A distant cousin, a Mrs. Tyack, had been very faithful with me and seriously advised me to 'break it off'.

'Yes,' said I, 'and then what would happen? What would be my next move?'

'You might see some one else you liked to marry.'

'But I can't imagine ever wanting to marry anybody else, however desperate the circumstances.'

'Still, it would be a good thing to break it off . . . just to stir him up a little.'

'How does one do it?' I asked, trying to appear anxious to pick up a wrinkle.

'You say something appropriate about not seeing your way to wait any longer, and return the ring.'

'Oh, that's no good at all,' I replied. 'I tried that last summer in Wales. My ring came off in some soapy water by mistake, for I never take it off, and I thought it would be a good joke to pretend to return it. So I screwed up my face, found Arthur sitting reading the paper, laid the ring by his side with the remark that I wished to end our engagement. His response, without turning from the paper, was, "I say, look here, what Parnell has been saying." Naturally I found Parnell's latest effort more interesting than my little joke, so I slipped the ring on my finger again.'

At this Mrs. Tyack tossed her head and exclaimed that I had no sense of my own dignity, took nothing seriously, and might expect a miserable future with a man of that type.

'What did she mean, mother, by all that notion of breaking off an engagement?' I asked.

'It's just one of the tricks women play on men. I could point out lots of instances even among our own acquaintance that would astonish you.'

'What do they do?'

'It's generally the mothers rather than the girls who do the mischief. What do they do? They seize on anything—say a man dances with a girl more than twice, or sits out with her for a talk, or takes her to a theatre. Her mother will "ask his intentions".'

'Well, if he has none, that's easy.'

Mother laughed. 'Not so easy as it sounds. I had a dreadful

business once in getting Dym out of a hole of that kind. It was too ridiculous. A girl whom you know quite well had been snubbed and ill-treated, Dym found her weeping and sympathized, kissed her no doubt—you know how soft-hearted dear old Dym always is—that was really all that had happened, and if you please he was expected to marry her! I could tell you of others who have been caught by such methods, and unfortunately not rescued.'

'Yes, but when they are actually engaged, what's the sense of breaking it off, as Mrs. Tyack suggested to me?'

'Why, that's to hurry on the marriage, for fear the man should come to his senses and wriggle out of it.' Here she instanced several cases from our own circle, where the husband would certainly have backed out if he had had time.

These were real eye-openers to me. Looking back on those days I see that mother made several attempts to enlighten me on many other points. Remarks and anecdotes of hers, vivid in my memory, passed over me at the time like water from a duck's back. Mother must have hoped that I would inquire further about these incidents, but I was amazingly lacking in curiosity. As for her views on a *happy* married life, on these she was quite explicit, and she shot them at me bit by bit.

'You must be ready to go anywhere in the world with your husband, from the Arctic to the Tropics.'

'Oh, rather,' said I, 'that would be fun.'

'It doesn't matter what sort of a house, or even hovel you live in, so long as you are happy together inside.' That seemed to me too obvious to require assent.

'One of the pleasantest things in married life is that you have no money of your own, but have to come to your husband for every sixpence.' Here mother and I saw precisely eye to eye, for we both hated money calculations.

'Some husbands and wives agree to go their own ways—each not minding what the other does. There may be points about this, but it's far better to discuss things, and come to some common plan . . . especially about anything to do with the children.'

'Oh yes, far better,' I agreed with an appreciative smile.

I have found throughout life that the easiest way to say anything extremely difficult is to call it over the stairs or across the garden in a casual tone. This gives the recipient time, for he can always pretend he didn't hear and ask for a repetition. It also gives him a chance to hide a tell-tale countenance. Perhaps it was some such idea of avoiding hateful 'tactfulness' that led mother to say casually one day, apropos of nothing, while she was writing a letter and I was busy over some Latin, 'I suppose you realize that you will have to sleep with Arthur?'

'Oh yes,' I replied, with the same appreciative smile that I had given to all her other remarks on a happy married life. I think now that she must have been puzzled as to how much or how little I knew. But she probed no further, and I think her restraint was wise. In all our talks, however, there were two injunctions reiterated so often that it was impossible for me to forget them. It was not until later years that I discovered the darker parts of her life that had given rise to these injunctions, which she had learnt 'with her blood'. One was 'be deliberate', sounding far more obvious and easy than it really is. The other was 'be sure you are never capricious with Arthur'. Obviously in her scheme of things men were the important people. Well, they are. And I shall never cease to be grateful to her for training me from childhood to appreciate this point.

Material considerations never troubled her. As for the possible date of our wedding, and all the ways and means and prospects of the future, she never referred to them. Nor did I, even mentally, for I knew it must be a long time ahead. There were some lines I came across and learnt by heart that fitted my present case exactly, and I used to say them to myself as I pounded off to school. They may not be correctly remembered, but they began like this :

*Most sweet it is, with unuplifted eyes,  
To pace the ground, if path there be or none,  
While a fair region round the traveller lies,  
Which he forbears again to look upon.*

## § 3

Where does a decade end? This is a story of the eighties, and perhaps should end with the winter of 1889. But a compromise will suit me best, for the early part of 1890 brought such a change in my work and life that a full stop seems natural. As soon as the autumn term was over mother and I put out for Cornwall. We were so anxious to arrive at Paddington in time that we started absurdly early, only to find that the winter timetable was different from the summer one, and that we had an hour and a half to wait. But mother thought there were few things more amusing than a railway station when oneself was calm and other people were not. But one can be too calm. Dym met us as usual at Plymouth, and took us off for a cup of tea in Mill Bay station, where the refreshment-room was away from the platforms. We had heaps to talk and laugh about, and Dym assured us that there was no hurry, for refreshment-room clocks are kept fast, but when we thought it was about time we were taking our seats again, we found an empty platform and the red lights of the last train to Cornwall just disappearing. There was nothing to do but laugh, incriminate one another, send a telegram to uncle Joe, and go to an hotel. Now it is just possible that mother's bed was damp—one seizes on any explanation, but ever after that holiday she was subject every now and again to mysterious pains. She would be perfectly well for a week or two, and able to take her long walks, and go sketching when it was fine; so that we hoped the trouble was passing off. When Easter was close at hand Arthur and I planned a special little holiday for her. I suppose we owe it to Moses, or perhaps some ancient moon-worshipper, that schools break up at different times in the spring. It chanced in '90 that my school was dispersed a full week before the one at Bedford; so Arthur suggested that mother and I should take rooms for that week at the Swan Inn at Elstow, where he could come over to see us every day; and he hoped to get his friend Bourne for a day or two.

In those days the town had not encroached on Elstow, and

the little village was one of those lovely spots of beauty that people are now beginning to value and try to 'preserve'. In addition to the usual beauties of old timbered cottages and thatched barns, great trees and a vivid, velvety 'green', it had an ancient moot-house, and a church with the curiosity of a tower separate from the main building. The association with Bunyan was another great attraction, and I liked to picture the jolly tinker drinking in the bar of the 'Swan' in his unregenerate days. Mother and I were entranced with the old inn itself, its rickety stairs and uneven floors, the homeliness of the innkeeper and his wife, the generous meals, and the one decoration on the wall of our sitting-room—a faded sepia print of biblical history from Adam and Eve to Revelation. I caught mother and Arthur laughing quietly together one day over an episode in this print, which had been depicted with more vigour than delicacy, and I heard her say, 'Believe me, it's always the woman who does the tempting'. I was rather shocked at the time, but have since come to pretty much the same conclusion.

Everything combined to make that a happy week for mother. She was in surroundings that recalled her boy Charles continually; she had recently had a letter from Barnholt who was expecting to come home in the summer; we had daily visits from Arthur and his fellow masters; and the weather was April at its best. What was not so pleasant she managed to keep to herself, as the following letter will show. It was written on our return to London, and came to my hand for the first time only a few days ago:

*West Kensington. April 17th '90. Here we are again, Tony darling—returned on Tuesday night, and dreadfully sorry were we to leave the sunny, quiet old village, beloved Elstow. How kind and thoughtful Arthur was I cannot possibly express. Our little spree cost us more money than we counted on, but never was money better spent in the procuring of happiness; it was altogether lovely and with much of a certain romance about it. Molly made a little sketch of the church, from our window, for you, but was so dissatisfied with its*

*finish that she tore it up, thereby making both Arthur and me angry. I did two or three sketches, which you will see when you come up. I do not feel much better and am altogether disheartened about myself. I am sure you have no idea how far from well I am; but as Molly says 'it's a poor heart that never rejoices'.*

*The sacred resting-place of our boy was looking lovely and Molly put some fresh flowers there every day—azaleas, lilies of the valley, and some sweet polyanthus and daisies.*

*Mr. Hutchinson came to call twice, and took tea with us in Arthur's room. Arthur said I was setting my cap at him. Mr. Bourne came on Tuesday to spend a day and night with Arthur; of course, he was brought to our rooms immediately; he's a delightful man as I am sure you will say if you ever see him. He and Arthur and Molly and I walked down to the station together; it was quite jolly tramping along in the dark. Had a letter from Dym this morning, or Molly had, same thing; he is fishing on Dartmoor. Please tell me how you are, you pearl of Antoninas, and when you are coming up. With dearest love*

*Mary.*

I find that quite by chance I began this story with a letter from mother, and am now closing it with the last she ever wrote. For about a week after our return from Elstow she seemed in splendid health and spirits, and we were full of plans for the future as well as getting ready for Tony's long-promised visit. We had just been to a good shop near South Kensington Station, to buy her a new paint-brush, when her mysterious pains became suddenly worse. In spite of her protests I called in a doctor, with the result that she was ordered to a nursing-home and operated on. She lived for a few days so cheerfully that I hoped all was well; but there was a sudden relapse, and with a last thought for Tony she died on May Day.

The nurses kindly led me away into an empty room, and I looked out on one of those suburban streets that seem to wipe out of life every vestige of dignity and grace. At that desolate moment I would have welcomed a dense fog, a



downpour of rain, or a thunderstorm; but it was a brilliant sunny day, and a barrel-organ must needs burst into a merry tune. It struck me like a dreadful mockery, but as I look back on it now it seems a fitting requiem for one who had braved her full share of tragedy, and yet had always managed to suck merriment from the least cheerful surroundings.



A  
LONDON HOME  
IN THE  
NINETIES



# I

## *I Cut the Painter*

### § 1

ON the lovely May-day morning of 1890 my mother died, after an illness of only a few days. Nothing was here for tears: she had had a remarkably full and exhilarating life; she had an inborn capacity for casting care aside; she had always wished for a sudden death; and when she knew it to be at hand her only request was that I should be good to her sister Tony.

Now it was to this beloved Cornish aunt of mine that I owed, almost as much as to my parents, the two best gifts that any elders can bestow on any children—a happy childhood and as good an education as lies in their power. So that ‘being good to Tony’ involved no burden, but only continuing the delight of regarding her as a second mother, and spending part of every holiday with her in Cornwall.

And my mother left me wealthy. In money, no. It was a case of no work, no dinner. But I was young, healthy, and doing what I enjoyed. I was teaching in a girls’ day-school in Kensington, under a fine headmistress, who allowed me to work along the lines I liked. Also I had three elder brothers, of whom I could never determine which was the most loved. Unfortunately, they were not at hand; the eldest, Tom, was living in Yorkshire with wife and children; the second, Dym, was more mobile as a bachelor, and was teaching mathematics in a school in Plymouth (a place on the way to Cornwall!); and the third, Barnholt, was at sea. These three would be bulwarks for me all through life, as mother was well aware, but she had been accustomed to ejaculate occasionally, ‘If only I saw you married to a good man I should die happy’. Well, she died quite at rest on that point, for on my twenty-first birthday I had become engaged to the man of all others that

she admired most. This was Arthur Hughes, who, like Dym, was teaching mathematics. But, unlike Dym, he hated the work, and was reading for the Bar, not as an escape, but because the Law, even in its seemingly absurd intricacies, fascinated him. His work was at Bedford, and I saw something of him once a fortnight when he came up to Gray's Inn to 'eat his dinners'.

In spite of all these sources of wealth, I was desolate. A mother's death must always make one feel cut away at the roots, and in my case it was worse, because she had always been like a sister as well as a mother in her complete comradeship and youthful outlook. My brother Dym, whom she and I used to call 'the branch of our family at Plymouth', was well aware how badly I felt her loss, and came to the rescue by frequent letters and an occasional dash up to Kensington, to see me and take me out somewhere. As soon as the summer term was over he insisted on my spending a week with him on Dartmoor, where he and his friend Barber were as usual to be trout-fishing. He met me at Newton Abbot and took me on to Totnes for a day or two, where we could have some walks beside the broad waters of the Dart. I enjoyed the scenery and the walks enormously, but what bothered Dym was that I had no appetite, even after a long walk. I was really sorry about this, for he tried to tempt me with all he could think of. I remember his astonished cry, 'What! Not eat this salmon! Why, my dear child, it was in the Dart a few hours ago!' 'Oh, Dym,' I pleaded, 'I really would if I could.' 'Well, darling,' said he, 'we'll see what a drive over the moor will do for you to-morrow.'

The air on that glorious drive blew away my lassitude. I took off my hat and let the wind do what it liked with my close-cropped hair. I laughed as I hadn't laughed for many weeks, from sheer physical exhilaration, and I felt like a newly created being as we drew up at the Duchy Hotel, Princetown. Dym had mentioned our destination, and both town and hotel sounded very grand to me. Indeed I felt a little nervous about the small size of my bag, at which Dym had raised an eyebrow

when he met me at Newton Abbot. But I was reassured on our arrival, for of town I saw none at all, and the hotel was surprisingly modest in appearance. To Dym it had become, from his frequent holidays spent there, almost a second home, and the proprietress welcomed us warmly. I soon found that the simplicity of the hotel was entirely confined to the things that didn't matter—its architecture and interior furnishings. Bedrooms and sitting-rooms were bare and even ugly, but the ducal quality of the hotel shone forth in its meals. These quite staggered me in their munificence. But I was prepared to justify them. How Dym laughed as he watched me dealing with the dinner after our arrival. The wind and sun of the moor had burnt my cheeks and sharpened my appetite to a quite inelegant extent; and not only Barber and his wife, but the other visitors too, couldn't help smiling. For this was one of those rare hotels (so rare that in a wide experience I have never come across another) where English people look cheerfully at all their fellow guests, and speak on the slightest provocation or none.

The meals were peculiar in another way. They faded out in the middle of the day. In fact the whole hotel faded out. After giving us a colossal breakfast, including real ham, fish, new-laid eggs, chops and steaks, raspberries and bilberries, and bowls of clotted cream at decent intervals on the table, the entire staff disappeared. I imagined that they went into contemplation on the subject of evening dinner for some hours, and then it was all hands to the task of creating it. Such degrading trifles as lunch and tea were nothing accounted of. Mrs. Barber and I were the only female guests, and the men were all there for outdoor sport of some kind. I don't know about the others, but Dym used to go the whole day between breakfast and dinner without opening his mouth, either to put anything in or utter a word. He and Barber would set off for the stream, the upper reaches of the Dart, lost to everything except trout, for they designedly fished well apart so as not to interfere with each other's sport.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Barber and I knew our role quite well:

we had the freedom of the moor, but must on no account come near the fishermen lest we disturb the trout, who (so the men asserted) had a rooted objection to womenfolk. Not far from the hotel was a tiny shop, the village Whiteley we called it, for it was so full of oddments of universal provision that it was difficult to edge into it. Indeed, there was a little home-made notice pinned by the door, 'Please enter sideways'. We suspected that this had been put there by some wag in the hotel. Here we would capture every morning a few biscuits or apples or nuts to take with us on our wanderings about the moor. We also took books, but I read very little, liking rather to bask in the sun and give myself up to the uncanny fascination of the boundless moor. The time passed rapidly, and we didn't even pine for a cup of tea at four o'clock, but weren't we all ready for our evening dinner!

The Barbers had to leave the day before we did, and Dym decided, in spite of my protests, that he wouldn't leave me alone all day. 'You've really seen very little of the moor,' said he, 'we'll spend our last day in going for a drive, so that you will be able to see more than you can by walking. The trout will be glad if I lay off a bit.' So he hired a pony-trap and off we started. It was the smallest little two-wheeled carriage imaginable. I think it must have been designed to carry one good-sized man, perhaps a farmer, to market. As we were both of small make we managed to sit squeezed together on the high seat. The pony was fresh and seemed to enjoy scudding at a spanking pace along the white tracks of road that could be seen winding away miles ahead. There were no hedges to hide them, but now and again the track would disappear in a dip of the moor, to reappear some distance farther on. Here and there would come a fork, and Dym, who knew the moor like the palm of his hand, never hesitated at such a junction. He was making for one or two favourite spots to show me, and I couldn't help wondering how he could tell one road from another without hedges or trees or any landmark whatever.

'I shouldn't care to be dropped here to find my way back,' said I, after an hour of this kind of thing.



'No, nor any one else who doesn't know the moor. For a stranger it's the very dickens. I'm always sorry for those poor chaps who try to escape their warders. I'll show you some of them on our way back, working in a gang.'

'What do they work at?'

'Mostly low stone hedges where no hedges are wanted. I think they might be given something to do that's worth while. The absurd little walls are built very slowly and beautifully, because they've more time than they know what to do with. I suppose the uselessness is part of the punishment. I've heard it said that the severest torture you can inflict on a man is to make him upset a load of stones, fill the cart again, unload them again, and so on. But it seems to me that the long term is enough without any torture at all.'

'Do you ever speak to the poor fellows?'

'No, strictly forbidden. Nor give them anything. But often when I've passed near enough to catch the eye of one of them I've dropped some baccy accidentally.'

When we had been driving for two hours or more, only stopping now and again to enjoy the view of some special tor, we reached what seemed a metropolis after the desert moorland, for we had not met a single person. Here there was actually a post-office and one or two cottages.

'You can guess the name of this place,' said Dym, 'for here's the post-office and here's the bridge—Postbridge.'

He hitched up the pony, and we were glad to get out and stretch our legs a bit. A river always drew Dym like a magnet and we hung over the bridge and stared at the water. The sun was shining brilliantly, showing up all the beauties of the moor and sky, for there were great masses of white clouds, and fleeting shadows on the middle-distance downlands. It was a perfect day, and I had no mind to leave Postbridge. But Dym descried a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, of a kind quite different from the white ones. Making a rapid reckoning of the way of the wind, the time, and the distance from home, he thought we could get back before the cloud began business. But he thought we had better be starting, because you never

knew on Dartmoor when you might be overtaken by a sudden squall and be drenched before you knew where you were. That would be nothing, I thought, for I should never know where I was anyway. We squeezed in again and turned the pony towards home. As we went Dym regaled me with the story of two men who were caught in a sudden downpour on the moor. There was, of course, no shelter of any kind, no symptom of hedge or bush anywhere. One of the men, an old *habitué*, saw the storm coming, hunted round for a good-sized stone, stripped off all his clothes and pushed them under the stone just in time. Down came the rain and he skipped about in it cheerfully. 'You fool!' cried the other, 'You'll catch your death,' as he huddled himself together as well as he could, but was getting drenched to the skin. In a few minutes the shower was over, out blazed the sun again, and the old hand continued his physical exercises till he was dry, then pulled out his dry clothes and put them on, with 'Who's the fool now?'

While we were laughing over this we saw that our own cloud was ominously near. The pony seemed to sense it, too, and hardly needed a touch of the whip to put out at his best pace; but the rain was upon us, a real searching pour, and we went into the 'Duchy' like drowned rats.

'Never mind,' said Dym, 'it's just the luck of the moor, and our laughter has kept us from catching cold—there's nothing like being jolly for warding off things. We'll just change and be as right as a trivet.'

'Change!' thought I, as I went up to my room, 'that is exactly what I cannot do,' and I looked ruefully at the few belongings which I had spread about on my arrival, to make them appear as many as possible in the various drawers and cupboards. I might just as well have looked out of the window for any possible garment. So I went to Dym's room and tapped at the door.

'I say, Dym, don't be shocked, but I've nothing to change *into*.'

'What! You have come to Dartmoor with only one dress!

Well, that beats cock-fighting, as mother used to say. . . . I'll see what the proprietress can do—she's equal to most emergencies.'

She was all smiles and accommodation, with a cheering undertone of approval . . . 'and quite right, my dear, not to come to a country place like this with a lot of fal-lals.' She produced a black silk dress, doubtless her Sunday one, and carried off my wet one to be dried by the kitchen fire. As she was nearly twice my size I added greatly to the gaiety of the dinner-table by hobbling in and gathering the folds as I went. So I needn't have been distressed, for it provided a jolly finale to a supremely happy week.

The next day we were off to Cornwall, to stay with our numerous relations in Camborne. Here Dym indulged me in my passion for riding by taking me for canters along the cliffs, on the grassy track that stretched for miles between the sea and the heather; and sometimes we would go farther afield to one of those Cornish villages with entrancing names. Tony encouraged the idea by having a beautiful new habit made for me. I felt very grand walking up to the horse in my trousers, with the tail of my skirt flung over my arm and flicking my crop. But that long skirt and that clumsy side-saddle—how ridiculous and dangerous they seem now! And when I see the modern girls in their sensible trousers, sitting safely and comfortably astride, I wish my riding days were not past. To have a horse under one gives an intoxication that the best bicycle or even the fastest car cannot inspire. Even an aeroplane has its limits; it can't give one companionship, it can never be a Pegasus.

One of the excursions that Dym planned stands vividly in my memory. It was a glorious summer morning and we started off to Helston, an old town full of historic and romantic associations for all Cornish people—especially the Furry Dance in May, one of the real pagan relics of the Phoenician Baal worship that has not been stamped out by the Wesleyan conscience. Our objective was a little farther on—Porthleven, on Mount's Bay. There we put up our horses at the inn and enjoyed a mighty lunch.

'Let's go for a stroll by the sea,' said Dym, 'I've got something funny to show you.'

And indeed it was one of the oddest natural formations I ever saw. The river Cober rises some ten miles north of Mount's Bay, fully intending to flow respectably into it; but just as it gets a few yards from the sea it receives a rude check; the sea seems to say, 'We don't want you,' and puts up a sand-bar, called the Loo. So the river has quite contentedly, as though with a smile, broadened out into a lake. Dym had often fished in this Loo Pool, so he knew it well, but was delighted at my staring at it in perplexity. At our backs, as we stood on the sand-bar, was the restless Atlantic, and in front of us a lovely expanse of perfectly calm water, with masses of beautiful trees coming down to its edge and waterfowl swooping over it. Dym's thoughts were not with the beauty of the scene, but with the trout that were escaping being caught, and as he grew lyrical over these I reflected how jolly it was of him to give up a day's fishing merely to take me to a place that he knew well. But I think my excitement and enjoyment of every moment till we reached home in the dusk made him as happy as myself.

It was on that ride home that he seized the chance to approach a subject that was on his mind. Our horses, a bit tired, were going at a walking pace.

'You know, Molly dear, I think Arthur is a splendid fellow—the best in the world—but I feel responsible for you now, and I can't let you be married until he has some kind of settled income. It seems a bit mad to me, this reading for the Bar.'

'But he loves it, Dym, and he is sick of teaching mathematics, and I would much rather wait till he gets the work he enjoys doing.'

'Yes, but the Bar is so precarious at any time, even if you have influence, which Arthur hasn't.'

'I know, but it's more fun to do things off your own bat, even if you don't make so much money.'

'You're as bad as mother. She never knew or cared what her income was, if income it could be called.'

It amused me to remember this conversation a year or two

later, when Dym himself was engaged to be married. He wrote to me, 'I don't hold with all this waiting; it's much better to be married and chance it.' That was all very well for him, but he was not intending to change his profession, as Arthur was. In fact, Arthur was taking big risks, for he was struggling with greater difficulties than Dym or I were aware of at the time. I knew that his mother lived alone in Wales, and relied on him to look after her, but it was not until many years later that I had a glimpse of those anxious years of which he never spoke. One of the oldest of his innumerable friends wrote to me about him, and after quoting Tacitus' *Suorum memor, sui negligens*, he went on: 'What a gallant fight he put up all his life against time and tide and fate and difficulties. He never had a proper chance. Lack of money clogged his steps at Cambridge . . . but he was eager to give it to others, and to my certain knowledge, when he was teaching at Bedford, nearly half his meagre salary went in alms to his "doctor brother" and "parson brother". His extraordinary capacity for making friends went alongside with fiery indignation at anything mean. "On bad terms with Paterson?" he burst out once to some would-be peace-maker. "Of course I am. I should be ashamed of myself if I were *not* on bad terms with Paterson."

My mother used to call him Don Quixote, the greatest compliment she could bestow on any one. And indeed the parallel was fairly close, for he was always ready to go to any length for any one in trouble, and give or lend as much as he could. I think I was the only one who never came in for his indulgence, for he was as severe with me as he was with himself. I had become so much a part of himself that I seemed to be included in Tacitus' *sui*. The realization of this afforded me deep satisfaction, for I felt that I had something that the ordinary love-story didn't know about.

## § 2

Our poor financial prospects had induced me to do my utmost to save a little money, and I had been working hard

to get my degree to improve my market value. I had already taken the Intermediate B.A. and was in the thick of preparing for the Final when mother died. She had taken the most intimate interest in every subject, and for some time after her death I could hardly bear the look of the books. But my holiday in Devon and Cornwall put new life into me and I was able to get through the Final in the autumn. My headmistress, who was one of the best, was very pleased, gave me more responsibility, and raised my salary.

All would have been well had it not been for my so-called home conditions. My post was a non-resident one, and I could have lived where I liked, but mother and I and a fellow teacher, Miss Williamson, had consented (much against the grain) to live at a house that had been started to accommodate a few pupils of the school who wanted to be boarders—just to help the scheme along. As long as mother's jolly presence enlivened the household it was bearable enough, but it was badly run, and the pupils who wanted to board there began to dwindle. Soon a quite different type of boarder was imported—several music students. There may be worse companions than music students, but, if so, I have yet to meet them. Singly, and for occasional social intercourse, they are probably delightful, but to live with in bulk! It was, of course, to their credit that they practised, but there was no close time for it. Practice, instrumental and vocal, would go on at any hour, frequently simultaneously in separate rooms, and the performers were never *all* out of the house at the same time. One advantage I gained from this was a lifelong ability to work through any noise. Worse than the practising nuisance was the talk at meal-times. Music must surely be an elevating business, but it seemed to have left these students untouched. Their conversation consisted almost exclusively of gossip and low jokes about the masters at the Academy of Music. If it's really funny I can enjoy a low joke with the best, but these were entirely humourless, and Miss Williamson and I didn't 'hear' them. Our failure to be shocked annoyed the tellers and spurred them to fresh efforts. Oddly enough it never occurred

to us that we might go to live somewhere else, but we escaped from that house whenever we could, and as soon as my examination was over I had more time for outings.

Seeing one day by chance that *Much Ado* was on at the Lyceum, I was seized by the idea that it would be fun to go to see it. The main attraction was that mother had always loved that play, chiefly the gaiety of Beatrice and the absurdity of Dogberry. 'But oh, you should see it *acted*', she would add. I had never inquired where she herself had seen it, and wish now that I knew what famous actors had made the play live for her. Another attraction for me was the Lyceum and Irving. From childhood I had heard enough of Irving from my brother Charles to arouse the keenest expectation, so that to see him in *Much Ado* would be a link with both him and mother. All this about a visit to the theatre! Well, at the age of twenty-four I had been to a play only some half-dozen times, and in each case I had been taken by a brother who managed it all. Was it possible, I wondered, to arrange such an outing without being 'taken'? I approached Miss Williamson. Did she think that we might venture together one Friday night when there would be no school the next day? She did most decidedly, and when we saw that we could go there and back by omnibus, and that the gallery was only a shilling, we hesitated no longer.

It was like tasting blood, or some exciting drug, for our first experience was so delightful that we missed no play that Irving put on, and as he was giving a rotation of them we were able to see something different nearly every week. But it was an endurance test, and I can quite understand why it was usual in those days for a girl to be 'taken' to a theatre. To get anything like a good seat in the gallery (and we could afford no better) we had to be there at least two hours before the doors opened. This meant standing on the stone staircase, which was lit here and there by a gas-jet in a wire cage, and smelt of orange-peel and stale perspiration. The light wasn't good enough to read by, so we amused ourselves by talking over the play and watching the human nature surging around us.

As soon as the glad sound of the pushing of a bolt told us that the doors were being opened, the insidious gentle pushing that had been going on all the time became less gentle, and we had to use our elbows to avoid being crushed, and sometimes a group of youths would make a concerted rush. . . . How glad we were to get past the paying-barrier and be free to leap ahead. Then followed a race, as we jumped over the low benches to reach the front row. There were no backs to the seats or divisions between them, so we were thankful to find ourselves in front of a kindly woman who would let us lean against her knee. In those days of gas-lighting and poor ventilation the atmosphere of the gallery didn't bear thinking about. But all discomforts were forgotten as soon as the curtain went up.

Among the plays we saw I best remember these: *The Bells*, *The Lyons Mail*, *The Corsican Brothers*, *Olivia* (an adaptation of *The Vicar of Wakefield*), *Charles I*, and, above all, *Much Ado*, which we saw three times. Ellen Terry was Beatrice as one might always imagine her, a mixture of impishness and deep feeling, from the moment when the play springs to life with her 'I wonder you will still be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you', right through till her lightning flash 'Kill Claudio' is followed by Benedick's thunder-clap reply. Surely no two lovers were more interesting. Most of the people around us seemed ignorant of the story and engrossed in its development. In the one tantalizingly short love-scene, interrupted by Beatrice's being summoned to her uncle, a woman behind me exclaimed, 'Oh, bother the uncle!'

In this play, too, Irving was at his best, for he knew how to bring out the humour of Benedick by a score of little gestures and facial expressions. In his tragic roles I was fascinated by the curious drag of the leg—a trait that Charles used to imitate with great effect. But on looking back I get little pleasure in retrospect from his treatment of tragedy, and even at the time much of it seemed exaggerated, and even ridiculous. The worst was *Lear*. In this Irving was so doddering and silly to begin with that he left no room to get much madder, and his wild efforts at it were so tiresome that when



he fell asleep in the hut it was a sheer relief, and I nearly called out to Edgar, 'Don't wake him.'

It is difficult to imagine Irving playing the part of Jingle—a not only farcical but subsidiary role. Yet Arthur actually saw this and said it was one of the funniest things he had ever seen on the stage. He was convinced that Irving's real genius lay in acting comic parts and that it was his itch to play Hamlet that had been his undoing.

These excursions cost little, considering the amount of pleasure we got from them, for eighteenpence usually covered our expenses. However, there was another indulgence that I allowed myself as a rare treat. Of this I was rather ashamed, and kept it quiet. Ever since my childhood a ride in a hansom had been a thing of bliss, and it still held some quality of fairyland for me. With a half-crown to waste I would walk along Kensington High Street, eyeing the crawlers, as the empty cabs were called. Drivers, expectant, would hold up a whip hopefully as I looked about. But I waited till I had seen a cab with all the right points: india-rubber tyres, good horse, cheery-looking cabby with a grey top hat and a flower in his button-hole. Then my raised finger was enough to bring him up to my side. In a blasé voice I would mention some entrancing spot as a destination, such as the Abbey, or Romano's. The reins would be elegantly lifted for me to get in, and I would sit back and float away, enjoying the London streets as Providence intended them to be enjoyed. Reaching my destination I would quietly return by omnibus. I liked to choose a restaurant for the cab to put me down, because of a story my brother Charles told me. As he was strolling along Oxford Street one evening a cabby drew up and said to him, 'Going to the Cri, Sir? I'll take you there for nothing.' When Charles looked surprised he added in an undertone, 'We aren't allowed to crawl there, but if we drive up with a fare, we are bound to get another.' 'Right,' said Charles, got in, and as he jumped out at the Criterion pretended to pay a fare to the grateful cabby.

So often has it seemed to happen in my life that the worst things have been fruitful of the best, and here was an instance.

The disagreeable conditions of our boarding-house drove us to the real enlargement of life that the theatre gave us. And on summer afternoons they drove us to long country walks, to Richmond Park or to Kew Gardens. We used to start forth by a tram, whose progress along the single line was so slow, with stops for change of passengers and long waits on loop lines for another tram to pass, that once I remember being disgusted to notice that a hay-cart with its steady plod was actually gaining on us. But, as in the gallery, when we reached the Gardens all tedium was forgotten, and we made for the Arboretum and spent happy hours stretched under the trees, reading and talking.

It was on one of our reluctant journeys back to the hated boarding-house that Miss Williamson made the bold suggestion that we should break loose and set up in rooms by ourselves. Taking fire at this, I made the bolder suggestion that we should make a completely fresh start by looking for new posts. 'Well, *you* begin,' said Miss Williamson, and urged me on before I had time to cool. So that same evening I went round to our headmistress, Miss Bennett, broached the idea and asked her advice. She was certainly taken aback, but was most generous in manner and deed, pressing upon me that it was time I took a post with wider scope than she could offer me, and promising me all the backing-up she could give.

'Let me see, how old are you now?'

'I'm twenty-four, but I don't feel like it.'

'Quite time you made a change. And don't mind me, dear. I shall write to the Cambridge Training College and ask Miss Hughes to send me another Miss Thomas.'

So kind was she that I returned in the mood to give up all idea of leaving her. But Miss Williamson kept me up to the mark, thrust note-paper at me, and advised me to write at once to my old school, the North London Collegiate, to see whether I could get a post there. So I appealed to my ever-revered friend, Mrs. Bryant, ran out with my letter, and dropped it in the pillar-box with that rubicon feeling one often experiences at these little red perils.

## II

### *A New Venture*

#### § 1

COME and see me to-morrow.'

This was the tantalizing reply to my letter. I started for Camden Town in the afternoon, telling myself not to hope for anything immediate. It was probably only to be a visit of friendly interest and promise for the future. But it was with real eagerness added to her wonted affection that Mrs. Bryant received me. Speaking hurriedly she told me that on getting my letter she had intended to give me a post in the school, but that something odd had just happened. Shortly before my arrival there had rushed upon her a member of the Council of Bedford College, full of a scheme for opening a training department for teachers, as a branch of the College. Their students, who were intending to teach, either started without any training or were going off to Cambridge for it. 'She seemed a bit incoherent,' said Mrs. Bryant, 'but clearly the main obstacle is the difficulty of finding any one who can undertake to run the scheme, and she hoped that I might know of some one. So I told her that I had got the very one that would do, actually wanting new work, and coming to see me, and I promised to send you on to her as soon as you came.' 'Me!' I gasped. 'Yes, you, and don't stop to talk but run down the road after her, towards the station. She's very tall and big, and dressed in black. Run.'

I ran, and soon saw my quarry nearing the station. She seemed very pleased when I touched her arm and said that I had been sent by Mrs. Bryant. Confused as I had been by Mrs. Bryant, I was still more so by the vague ideas poured forth on me as the Camden Road trams went by, but I gathered that the College was in London, not Bedford (as I had imagined), that the new work would not begin for some months, that I must

and what intelligent questions they could put to me. 'This is a very anxious and responsible undertaking, is it not?' was the general tone of the chairman and several other kindly men, and to all these noble thoughts I assented freely. But there was one old woman waiting her chance and crouching to spring. I have never seen any one so ugly in face, so repellent in manner. She had a constant feud (as I learnt afterwards) with the member of the Council who had originated this idea of a Training Department, and had prepared herself to damn it if possible. As soon as the men had exhausted their rather pointless questions, she took the floor. Eyeing me fiercely, she opened her speech with the statement that she had personally inspected this so-called training work. Then she described with vivid detail, diverting illustrations, and great relish, the unpractical rubbish that went on, the outrageous nonsense that was being taught, and the utter waste of time of the whole concern. When she had used up all her facts and epithets, she sat back and glared, pausing for a reply. Meanwhile I had had leisure to note the embarrassment of the other members, and the uncomfortable fidgeting of the men at her bullying rudeness. So I looked at her dreamily for a moment or two in silence, and then said slowly: 'You seem to have had a very narrow, and a very unfortunate experience of training work.'

An outbreak of scarcely checked delight rippled round the assembly, and to cover the awkwardness the kindly chairman made some pleasant and non-committal remarks to me, and I was allowed to depart without further question. A few days later I received notice that I was appointed, and that I was to begin work in the following January. It was a blow to find that for this 'anxious and responsible undertaking' I was to receive £100, non-resident. Even in those days, when money went farther than it does to-day, it was almost a starvation salary. Cambridge would be far better than this, thought I, and I wrote to the Bedford College authorities to this effect, pointing out that Miss Hughes was anxious to have me. But I had such an indignant letter from the member who had started the scheme, accusing me of breaking my promise to her, that I

gave way to her insistence, although I knew perfectly well that I had made no promise at all. She admitted then that I had been the only candidate for the post, and I thought she might have appealed to me more suitably than by accusing me of perfidy. But she was too masterful to be gainsaid, and I comforted myself with the reflection that though I should have little money I should have an absolutely free hand to do what I liked.

All my spare time was now spent in planning my campaign. My students were presumed to have had a good education, with a degree or other qualification, and required only professional training for one year. In other words, I could assume that they knew the subject they were to teach, and only needed to be helped to teach it effectively and to see its relation to education as a whole. Even this vague idea was not suggested to me by Bedford College authorities, who left me to do exactly as I liked. Even my men friends, my 'pillars' in all emergencies, my brothers and Arthur, didn't seem likely to be much use here. To Tom and Dym the training of a teacher seemed merely funny. But a holiday spent at Arthur's home in Aberdovey enabled me to pin him down for help. 'Well,' said he, 'the great thing for whatever you set about, is to start with a skeleton.' 'Oh I've got my skeleton,' said I, 'it's this: first term, some simple psychology in very close relation to actual lessons; second term, special school subjects; third term, bigger educational problems. Then I've got to edge in some hygiene, some logic, and some history of great educators.'

Arthur approached my scheme in a sceptical spirit. He shook his head over psychology as being only a grand name for common sense. 'As for boys,' said he, 'there's nothing like a good caning all round on a Monday morning, whether they deserve it or not. It steadies them.' But he was willing to admit that the teachers of girls might possibly attain some common sense by means of a little logic and psychology, if the lectures were kept practical. Glancing at my third-term programme he said: 'Don't be too nebulous about what you call bigger educational problems. Why not give them some

hard facts?' 'What do you suggest?' I asked. 'What about a course on Educational Polity?' 'Polity? Is that the same as policy?' 'No, there's a big distinction; the policy of a society is its relation to other societies, but its polity is its management of its own affairs. It would be good for these girls to know something of the development of education in England during the nineteenth century, the effects of the industrial revolution on it, and all that kind of thing.'

'Did that affect education much?' I asked.

'Yes. People got drunk with the idea of producing large quantities of things cheaply, such as iron railings, and they thought that masses of children could be educated by similar cheap methods. Hence the curse of making them sit in rows, "being good", while one teacher spouts at them or insists on their all doing the same exercise. If your students see the origin of this, they will no longer consider it a method ordained by providence, or even a practical necessity. And if you know how a thing grew up you are half-way to seeing how to improve it.'

This sounded good, but I didn't know where to turn for the facts. 'Oh, I can give you the main ones,' said Arthur, and then and there began to reel out to me descriptions of the old hedge-schools and dame schools, the 'inventions' of Bell and Lancaster to meet the demand for 'mass' instruction by means of monitors, the founding of the National and British Societies, and so on to Forster's Bill in 1870 and compulsory education for all. It took us many a seance to cover all this ground, and I was busy taking notes all the time. Comparison of our polity with those of France and Germany had to be discussed, as well as the status of the so-called public schools, the universities, and private schools. Then, of course, the religious question (a serious bone of contention in Wales) was considered, and the difficult point as to whether education, if compulsory, ought not also to be free. I felt provided with ample matter for a short course on these lines for my third term.

'How did you come to know all this?' I asked.

'A man gets to know these things,' said he.

A married friend to whom I related this incident with some pride was not at all impressed. 'That's the usual thing, Molly,' said she. 'One of the great advantages of being married you will soon find is that you have a fount of wisdom ever springing at your side; you have only to dip. How men get to know everything astounds me. And it's the same thing if something goes wrong in the house—a clock won't go, a tap drips, or there's a smell of gas—as soon as the wretched thing sees a pair of trousers it gives up the game and resumes work.'

'A bit humiliating for us, isn't it?' said I.

'Not at all. We women have far more difficult and delicate problems to face. If we were learned and practical and wise we should have no reserve strength.'

## § 2

On the opening morning in January 1892 I walked into the lecture-room that had been assigned to me, feeling a fair amount of confidence. But two shocks awaited me. The students were duly there, looking all pleasant and expectant, but seated firmly on one side, note-book in hand, was the member of the Council who had sponsored the new department. She had come, she said, to see how I should start it. My plan was to devote the first hour to giving my skeleton of the year's work, with reasons for this and that. I soon gathered from her manner that my visitor was properly impressed, and at the close she was very cordial in her appreciation of the scheme. I fancy that she was anxious to be prepared against any attacks from her enemy on the Council.

The other shock was to see, sitting meekly among my students, none other than Miss Armstead, the classics mistress of the North London Collegiate School, who was the finest teacher I had ever sat under. She smiled happily at me now and again during that first hour, but as soon as possible I approached her in the spirit of John the Baptist, to ask why on earth she had come to me for help in a business at which

she herself was so brilliant. 'Oh, I know absolutely nothing about psychology,' said she, 'nor logic nor hygiene nor all these other things you mention. It's all so exciting. . . . My only regret is that I shan't be able to attend full time, because of my work at school. And I shan't be able to do any of the practical work. What fun it will be just to go about theorizing, when I've been making mistakes all my life!'

I was relieved that she didn't want practical work, for that was my chief trouble. All theorizing might be fun, but it was not my idea of training. I wanted, if it could be managed, that every psychological law mentioned should be illustrated in school life; and that every success or failure in school life should be explained by a psychological law. But to get school life—that was the rub. The College authorities made not the slightest effort to help me in this matter by giving me introductions to the schools in the neighbourhood. I had to go round and beg for permission to give a few lessons here and there. I was as coldly received as if I were attempting to sell tea or basket-chairs. Then, of course, I was told that training was entirely useless, or indeed harmful—'putting ideas into their heads'; that having strangers in upset the school routine; and so on. I admitted all. Then, by throwing myself on their mercy, and by pointing out how enhanced would be their chances of heaven if they helped the cause of education by giving me half an hour a week, I induced one or two kindly disposed principals to allow us in on trial. One of the schools to which I gained admission was a little dame's school, where Mangnall's *Questions* were actually in use. With my scanty triumphs I returned to College and parcelled out among the students the few courses available, so as to squeeze the utmost value from these scraps of real teaching. Syllabuses were prepared for them, notes for each lesson considered, and friendly discussions (rather than formal criticisms) carried out in College afterwards. As time went on and downright failures were few, and the schools survived the dangerous outside influence, and the pupils received us with delight, and the teachers got a spare half-hour for their corrections . . . why



even the principals became pleasant, and actually tried to be helpful. One day I was drawn aside privily by the headmistress for her to impart her new-born idea: 'What these students really need is to be shown *how* to teach.' I smiled assent and admitted that her advice was sound.

Another difficulty had been lurking in my mind for a long time, and as the second term was coming near I had to face it. How best to deal with special subjects? Each student would probably intend to specialize in some branch, such as mathematics, modern languages, or science. Jack of all trades though I was, it was not possible for me to cope with the best methods for all these. Suddenly I realized that I was starving in the midst of plenty. Bedford College was replete with professors of everything, genial fellows with whom I had hobbled at staff meetings. Surely I could harness them. So one by one I waylaid them in some passage and asked them casually whether they would spare an hour to give my students a lecture on their subject.

'But what on earth is there to say about it?' was the usual tone of the reply.

'You must find among your own students some who have been badly taught?'

'Oh, rather!'

'Well then, just come and talk to my people about your grievances, tell them how you wish all schoolchildren could be properly taught your subject, what mistakes to avoid, what chief points to aim at, and so on. Or indeed talk about anything at all. It is the clash with a bigger mind that these girls want, especially a man's, for they may be buried in girls' schools for years. I don't care what revolutionary ideas you put into their heads—in politics or religion or art—so long as you say what you really mean.'

As I pressed my point in such ways a look of intelligence would come over my victim's face, and he would beamingly agree to do his best, and fix a date. My plan was to devote a complete week to each leading school subject. Before the lecture was to be given the College library was raided for any

books on the subject, various text-books were produced and criticized, our own past troubles were discussed, and the latest modern methods were soberly considered. We had plenty of questions to propound to the lecturer when his hour arrived. And what good stuff each professor gave us, evidently enjoying the chance to say what he thought, letting loose subversive views in an irresponsible way, abusing ancient follies and modern fads.

The most revolutionary was the history specialist, Mr. Allen, who was so earnest that he twisted himself into a kind of knot round his chair and barked out his opinions like a Hyde Park orator. He was dead against all the usual methods of teaching history, training his biggest guns against any attempt to draw morals or any effort to make it picturesque. Science, that was the thing. History was merely a branch of biology. The doings of human beings in the past were to be studied and recorded as cold-bloodedly as the wriggings of insects under the microscope. The students were too much overawed to ask him how this method was to be carried on in school life, but they were wholesomely headed off anything like an emotional touch in their history lessons.

The mathematics man was generous indeed, not only in his ready assent to my request, but also in his offer to give a series of six talks. One would not be of much use, he said, for it was in the earliest stages of dealing with Number that the mischief began, and he would like to talk about those difficulties as well as the later ones. 'I find that my women students here in College cannot be broken of their school habit of shirking fresh thought, and waiting for some "rule" or "dodge" and then learning it by heart; real grappling with a problem has become almost impossible for them. People ought to begin with realities in the cradle.' Mr. Harding was a man of humour as well as sympathy with weakness, and his talks were enjoyed to the full. One of his main principles in teaching mathematics was to show the close connexion of every step with the needs of ordinary life. He described how geometry had begun, as its name implies, from the need to measure out

the fields, after the Nile had flooded away the boundaries every year. A book on the subject had been discovered with a date some two thousand years B.C. and Euclid was only the author of a 'modern text-book'.

His plan of teaching little children to intuit numbers by the use of playing-card patterns has now become a common-place, but in those days it was a striking change from learning the multiplication table by heart. In ordinary school work he considered that the usual stumbling-block was division, owing to the two quite separate meanings of the word, and these two meanings had to be cleared up. I fancy that the maddening 'docility' of the average woman student must have broken his spirit, for later on, when he was writing to congratulate me on my first-born, he said, 'Be sure not to teach your children the stuff I talked about; teach them in the old-fashioned way; it pays better; memory, I fear, will always triumph over reason.'

A great contrast to Mr. Harding's ready acquiescence met me in the professor of classics, Mr. Platt, who required corkscrew methods to induce him to give us a lecture of any kind.

'B-but, my dear Miss Thomas,' he stammered, 'there is b-but one way to t-teach Latin. There are no d-dodges or short cuts. Latin has to be *learnt*.'

'Quite,' I readily rejoined, 'but could you point out its value when once it *is* learnt? A young pupil asked me that question once, and I was put to it to give her a ready answer.'

I believe this aspect of the matter was quite new to him. He stroked his chin in silence for a bit, and then said, 'Very well, I'll d-do my b-best.'

Unlike Mr. Allen, who had poured forth his indignation in a stream of extempore fervour, and unlike Mr. Harding with his light-hearted chat, Mr. Platt had written out his whole lecture on blue draft-paper (for I believe that in his lighter moments he was a barrister). Only one point in his brief, or rather opinion, on the teaching of classics remains in my memory, and that because of its oddity. He maintained that one great value of the study of Latin was that it acted as a corrective to Christianity. (Here we all sat up and took sharp

notice.) While our established religion exhorted us to offer the other cheek to the smiter, the whole spirit of Latin literature suggested that we should smite back good and hard. The combination of the two had made England what she was. I longed to ask him *what* England was. He was too wary to elaborate the subtle satire of his statement, and I wondered afterwards whether he was even conscious of it.

I had hardly written these words when the answer to my wondering came to hand, in the shape of a letter to *The Times* which runs thus:

May I add to the unpublished fragments of verse by A. E. Housman an amusing distich, which I had from the late W. P. Ker.

A colleague and great friend of Housman's at University College, London, was the late Arthur Platt, Professor of Greek there.

Housman and Platt infused 'a certain liveliness' into the serious pages of the *Journal of Philology* by tilting at each other in jesting, but friendly, fashion.

In reference to these sparrings Housman made these two lines, which deserve not to be forgotten:

*'Philology was tame and dull and flat;*

*God said "Let there be larks," and there was Platt!'*<sup>1</sup>

Obviously there was no unconscious humour in Mr. Platt. I only wish we had been provocative enough to get some more of his larks.

Professor Herkomer's lecture on Art was more practical for his art-students than for any one endeavouring to teach. He gave a most amusing account of the proceedings when the selection committee for the Royal Academy were doing their selecting. He advised any one who aspired to have a picture accepted to make it long horizontally and short vertically. 'There's a great shortage of pictures of this shape,' said he, 'and we'll accept the poorest stuff, to fill the empty spaces on the walls.'

<sup>1</sup> From Francis Pember, All Souls, Oxford, 7 Nov. 1936.

Another year he was unable to deliver a lecture himself, but was kind enough to write a paper for us, and send one of his underlings to read it. The underling was more artistic than literary, and read so badly that the students could take no sensible notes, and I was roused from semi-somnolence by hearing the amazing statement: 'Such a course of work will enable you to reach the gaol of your ambition.'

For Art I had to fall back on my own resources. I had kept up my hobby of studying in the National Gallery, and I induced several of the students to catch my enthusiasm. Miss Worley, one of my best, essayed to give a course of lessons on Italian art in one of our schools, and even took a party of her pupils to the Gallery. How chagrined she was that it was almost impossible to get them past Frith's *Derby Day*, and that they admired the frame of a Fra Angelico far more than the picture. She and I then laughed together over Rousseau's wise remark that the greater the picture the simpler should be the frame.

Yet another variety from our College staff was afforded by the science specialist, a woman. She was quite the wisest person I have ever known—a living reproof to the foolish. 'A fine morning!' was my greeting to her one day in the cloak-room. 'I have not had time to think of the weather,' was her almost reproachful reply. She was too conscientious to say 'Yes' without due consideration.

Much to my surprise she was only too ready to give a lecture to my people, and I was grateful indeed that she would spare the time. As for myself, I knew no science. Like Arthur Sidgwick I had 'not even taught it'. So I was prepared to learn a great deal about its proper place and treatment in the schools. What was my dismay to find that instead of giving her views on such points she spent the entire time in arguing the importance of knowing one's own subject (a quite unnecessary point to labour) and the utter futility of the training of teachers. In short, she was letting off her spleen in a way that could be no possible use to the students. However, her depressing remarks aroused so much indignation in her audience that more

good than harm resulted. But I took care not to ask her help in the succeeding years.

By the third term we had all become enthusiastic in the work and found the time too short for the programme. Nervous as to the reception of 'educational polity', I introduced it as a dull subject, a necessary grind, and so on. But I managed to clothe it as a kind of story, and as the pathetic struggle for a decent education and better conditions for English children was unfolded, in as dry and matter-of-fact tones as I could achieve, the interest of the students warmed and it became the most welcome item of the week. I was able to illustrate the story, not only by pictures of a vast mass of children being taught by a 'monitor', and of old-fashioned dame schools, but also by my visit as a child to a dame school in a Cornish cottage, and by some of Arthur's memories of similar oddities in Wales. What interested them most was my description of one of the very earliest (I suppose) play-centres in the East End of London. When I was at the North London School in the eighties some of the teachers ran such a centre in Stepney, hiring a large room and inviting any children to come for play once or twice a week. It was always crowded, and on one occasion a little person aged three arrived, clad in absolutely nothing but a piece of old shawl pinned round her. At this point in my lecture, a student leaned forward and said, 'Do you call this *dull*?'

### § 3

Meanwhile my 'home' conditions, although better than the Kensington boarding-house, were not ideal. By a stroke of luck an old Cambridge friend of mine, Miss Rogers, got a post at the Baker Street High School just as I began at Bedford College, so that we were to be working within a stone's-throw of one another, and agreed to take rooms together. We had a bedroom each and shared a tiny sitting-room. This was fit for meals but nothing else, for the table was too small to work at, in view of the vast piles of history exercise-books that Miss Rogers brought home to correct. And we had a running

accompaniment to all our activities from the adjoining house—a voice that kept up an obbligate of ‘Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay’. It sounded like a small boy, but why was he not in school? Illness could not have kept him at home, for obviously he was in rude health. We never solved the mystery, and he never changed his tune. For me, owing to my previous training with the music students, ‘Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay’ became merely blended with the ugly furniture, but poor Miss Rogers was driven to her bedroom.

Our meals still give me a shiver in retrospect, for they were nearly always cold mutton. The little joint was hot on Sunday, and then lasted through the week. Once we asked to have it warmed up, but the charge for gravy was so excessive that we couldn’t or wouldn’t afford a repetition. I have great sympathy with Rhodes, who is said to have attributed his success in life to cold mutton. He suffered so much from it as a child that he determined to make himself rich enough never to have to eat it again. To us, life-savers came occasionally from our homes in the west—Devon and Cornwall—in the blessed shape of eggs, butter, cream, jam, fruits, buns, and pasties. Among these a bottle of pickles from Cornwall stands out pre-eminent, for it enabled us to swallow more mouthfuls of that cold mutton. One day some eggs arrived in a smashed condition, and we asked to have them made into a custard. It was a splendid affair, and we ate in rapture, but checked our appetites so as to keep half for the next day. What was our chagrin to learn from the dastard lips of our landlady that she had ‘put it away’. We knew the dreadful significance of this phrase, and although Miss Rogers let loose a good rush of winged words, we both knew that they could not recall our custard, which had gone into the great beyond.

One day Miss Rogers came in with the exciting news that a grand building had been opened quite near, called the Ladies’ Residential Chambers. We hurried off to see it and make inquiries, full of rosy visions of being free of landladies for ever, and able to eat our rice-pudding under our own fig-tree. We found a dignified Lady Superintendent, who informed us

that every applicant must have references and must agree to certain regulations, of which the chief seemed to be that no nail must be driven into the walls. There was a flat available on the top floor, containing two rooms and a third little place, half kitchen, half scullery. One bathroom, charged extra, had to serve all the flats on one floor. There were six stories and no lift. Well, it seemed to us the promised land, and we spent all our spare time figuring out the cost. The rent was high and we had no furniture, but we reckoned that in the long run we should spend less than in our lodgings, and get infinitely more comfort. And I reflected that any furniture I bought would come in useful when I was married. How we enjoyed prowling round the little back streets in search of bargains—chairs, a gaunt table ‘salvaged’ from a fire, and a rickety writing-desk that Mary Wood called the ‘demon bureau’ on account of its hideous appearance. It deserved the name from its many drawers, into which I put things and lost them, often shaking the whole concern into its component parts in frantic efforts to find them. One looking-glass we bought was so vile that it discouraged vanity. Nothing will destroy this bit of our furniture, and it hangs in my kitchen to-day, the hero of a hundred moves. Some of my brother Charles’s pictures enlivened my walls, and Dym sent me a pound to spend on curtains. Meals gave us no trouble, for a good dinner was served in the common dining-room, lunch was either a picnic affair at home or else taken at a tea-shop, and our gas-ring was enough for breakfast requirements. This we used to eat together in the ‘kitchen’. We shared the labour thus: Miss Rogers ‘laid’ the eggs overnight, and I cooked them in the morning. If we both chanced to be in at lunch time we unbent over a game of halma. There was no time or brain-vitality for chess, but just enough for halma. We became so adept at this foolish game that the one who had first move was sure to win.

The evening dinner was always a pleasant interlude, for we met a variety of interesting women, all of them at work of some kind—artists, authors, political workers, and so on. There was one artist with whom I became specially friendly



owing to our common interest in early Italian art. She persuaded me to make copies of details from the pictures in the National Gallery, since it would teach me more than any amount of reading about the painters. She thought Ruskin was all very well, but you could have too much of him. I have never been grateful enough to her for these talks at dinner. Once or twice a week I used to go to the Gallery and make little sketches as I stood, and soon came to know the various schools, the painters' styles, and the individual pictures. I used to take my efforts down to dinner to show Miss Harwood, and she would criticize splendidly, sometimes praising and sometimes saying, 'No. That won't do. You can do much better than that.' I think she suffered more than most people from ugly sights and stupid companions; she told me how some visitor would remark on leaving that she had had a pleasant time, 'Little thinking,' added Miss Harwood, 'that I was exhausted; such people are blood-suckers.' I am not so sensitive myself, but often enough feel that people take more out of one than they give.

Sitting next me at dinner one evening was an influential member of the staff of the Baker Street High School, and as she chatted she said:

'I hear that you share a flat with our Miss Rogers. . . . I wonder whether you could induce her to be a little less conscientious?'

'I've tried often enough,' I said, laughing, 'to persuade her that the girls never dream of reading all the long red-ink comments that she makes on their exercise-books. But surely there has been no actual complaint about it?'

'Oh, no. But the other day I overheard a group of children in the cloakroom. "What's the next lesson?" asked one. "Baiting Rogy," was the reply. By some discreet detective work I discovered that these little demons manage to spend a large part of the lesson in arguing about the marks: "Please may I have a mark for this?" or more effective still, "Please you have given me a mark too much." And although poor Miss Rogers gets flustered and annoyed at the waste of time,

she attends to each plea as though she were a High Court Judge. No wonder they enjoy it!

I hadn't the heart to pass this on to Miss Rogers, but I told it (properly disguised) to my students, as a warning of what an enlargement of the conscience might produce. Providence had endowed this friend of mine, I told them, with a mind full of splendid stuff, 'instead of which' she spent her evenings in paltry corrections, when she might have gone to a theatre or been for a country walk, and come next morning all fresh and jolly to give a rousing review of the Civil War, or what not, that would correct their historical faults at a blow; and what mattered spelling faults? Such trifles any sensible teacher ought to put right politely as she goes.

I used to tempt Miss Rogers to a theatre as often as I could, and several times we went to the Court Theatre in grand style, for a cousin of hers owned it and used to send us tickets for the stalls. We could stay out till any hour, for although the main door was locked at eleven, each tenant had a latch-key. Miss Rogers had a nasty trick of asking me suddenly, at some poignant moment of the play, 'Did you remember to bring the key?' I determined to cure her of this by a bit of strategy; pretending to hunt through all my pockets in desperate anxiety, I looked at her in dismay, and wondered where on earth we could go for the night. When she had suffered enough I told her that I should repeat this performance every time she so much as mentioned the key in future.

What with our work and our recreations we led a happy life together, but I felt it rather unfair that I should have so many more of life's good things than she had. For by this time Arthur had been 'called' and had taken the plunge of coming to London to start his legal career. So once a week at least we used to meet and go for a long country walk or prowling about the unfrequented historical bits of the City or visit some picture gallery; and on Sunday we went to the morning service at the Temple, to enjoy good music and an extremely learned sermon. All the little contretemps of the week were blown away during these outings.

Epping Forest was one of our favourite haunts, and with some difficulty we discovered the old cottage, Little Monkham, in which I had been born. It stood among the trees, within a few hundred yards of the railway near Buckhurst Hill Station, where my father used to start for the City every morning. It is still standing as I write to-day, but is not long for this world, for new houses of the 'Monkham Estate', with all modern conveniences, are creeping up to it.

Arthur had taken temporary lodgings in Great Coram Street, sinister in sound and appearance. I do not care to let my fancy roam over his diet during this period. He told me that an aggressively successful barrister said to him one day, 'Ah, Hughes, what do you do, ah, about lunch?' 'Oh, that's simple enough,' replied Arthur, 'if I have any money I have lunch, and if not I don't.'

His first case in Court was an excitement for both of us. I had a telegram with the single word 'Won', and on the following evening went with him and his solicitor to the pantomime. The choice of entertainment lay with the solicitor who bought the seats, and we managed to conceal our boredom through the whole show—transformation scene, clown-tricks, and everything.

Soon after this he managed to get quarters in Gray's Inn, some delightful old oak-panelled rooms in Field Court, in a building subsequently pulled down. Indeed it was in a shaky condition even then. But how lovely the flavour of the rooms and how easily they were comfortably furnished with two deep basket chairs, a second-hand table, and two of Charles's pictures on the walls. And the big windows looked out on Gray's Inn Gardens, with the cawing of rooks and memories of Bacon. Arthur was 'done for' by his laundress, Mrs. Keyes, one of the most lovable women I have ever met. Rosy-cheeked, of uncertain age, invariably bonneted, she appeared to rejoice in her work, which was mostly confined to cooking breakfast on a small gas-stove, and tidying up generally. I asked Arthur why she was called a 'laundress', and he said that the usually accepted theory was that laundresses were so called because

they never washed anything. What she enjoyed most was the arrival of visitors. And of these there was no lack. The brothers of the family, 'the boys' as I always called them, were the most frequent visitors. The parson brother, Llewelyn, used to like an excuse to run up to town to see that the bishops were doing their duty at some Assembly or other. The doctor brother, Alfred, was now professor of anatomy at Cardiff, and very well off, and couldn't keep away from London for long. My own brothers, Tom and Dym, were equally bitten with the love of the old town, and could always be sure of a hearty welcome and a shake-down in the ample rooms in Field Court. Of course no casual visitor ever invaded Arthur's sacred room in the Temple, complete with law-books and clerk.

In the spring of '93 the best visitor of all arrived. My sailor brother Barnholt had three weeks' leave. This he parcelled out between us. Dym met him at Plymouth and kept him for the first week, then he went to Tom in Yorkshire for the second week, and the last week he spent in Gray's Inn. Tom and Dym stole a week-end from their work to run up to town, anxious to have every possible moment with their favourite brother. I used to go over to tea, to 'pour out' for them all, and enjoy the endless talk, and be chaffed and teased as in the old days at home in Canonbury. Two or three times Barnholt ventured to the Ladies' Residential Chambers, to see that I was all right. He was a bit overawed by Miss Rogers, who was extremely large, and he insisted on giving her what she called the brevet title of *Mrs.* Rogers. She took the liveliest interest in all the boys, and especially in Arthur. As for herself, she had a most charming mother who used to come to see us now and again, but of love-story she had none. She told me that at the age of sixteen she looked in her mirror and said, 'You are very plain; make up your mind once for all that no one will ever want to marry you.' There seemed to me more heroism and pathos in this than in lots of novels, for instead of being soured by her unattractive appearance she was full of wit and humour and warm-heartedness. She was fond of what she called the 'three-volume' story of the Devon maiden: 'the first

time she married was because she was young and silly-like; the second time she married it was for cows and sich; but the third time she married it was for pure, pure *lov*.'

During the few hours that Barnholt spent in Gray's Inn when Arthur and the others were not there, he was fully entertained by Mrs. Keyes. She dusted the room over and over again while he regaled her with yarns of dreadful storms 'round the Horn' in a sailing vessel, with the sailors on their knees in despair. And she had quite as harrowing disclosures to make of horrors in Gray's Inn.

'Down below 'ere, Sir, in these 'ere very buildings, there's corpses.'

She had been during one spell of her lurid career a kitchen-hand in a London restaurant, and had seen things.

'Don't you never eat in no restaurant, Sir. Me and Keyes could tell you things . . . what they does to make the vegetables green! and the thick soup! Ah!'

The dear soul broke down with genuine grief when the news came, some two months later, of Barnholt's death in South America.

### III

## *America Calling*

THE long vacation of '93 was close at hand, and Cornwall in my mind's eye, when I had a surprise. I had been selected to represent Bedford College at Chicago. The 'World's Fair' was being held there, a huge exhibition of everything, outshining our London 'Fisheries', Naval Exhibition, and such-like. In connexion with it, as a kind of serious side-show, was a big Educational Conference. My duties were to be simple, merely to attend any meetings that seemed useful, to read at one of them a paper by Mrs. Bryant, and to write a report when I returned. Expenses were to be paid, and there was nothing to prevent my going. My natural advisers, Arthur, Dym, and Tony, were all for my seizing such a chance. They had all travelled abroad and knew the value of seeing strange places, and I had seen nothing more foreign than Wales and Cornwall; and as for a sea voyage, the only steamboat I had experienced was a penny paddle-boat on the Thames.

The eight of us who had been chosen from various schools and colleges met at a house in Gower Street, to be introduced to each other and to receive final instructions and books of tickets from Mrs. Henry Fawcett. For travel on board ship she told us that the most useful thing was a hold-all, about a foot and a half square, made of brown holland, and endowed with pockets of different sizes, to contain slippers, brush and comb, handkerchiefs, and so on. It could be rolled up with a strap, and made to carry odds and ends. With this and a cabin-trunk we should be complete. I bought the cabin-trunk with comparative ease, but spent several feverish hours of the short time left in concocting, with the help of Miss Rogers, this confounded hold-all. It caused Arthur much amusement, but beyond this it had no advantages. Seldom was anything in its right pocket, no article was really held and the whole

contraption (intended to be hung by tapes in the cabin) was never within reach when wanted.

Arthur arranged a pleasant treat for the evening before I was to start, a concert at the Albert Hall, to hear Patti (her 'positively last appearance'). London was gay with flags and flowers and illuminations, to celebrate the royal wedding, and the initials G and M were everywhere. All I remember of the concert was the glorious voice of Patti, and the thrill that ran through the audience at her encore when the first notes of 'Home Sweet Home' reached us. I can still hear the long-drawn beauty of the word 'home' as she filled the vast hall with it, and the thunder of applause when the song closed.

The following evening Arthur came to put me and my belongings on a cab and see me off by the night train for Liverpool. 'I've put in my pocket,' said he, 'a small flask of brandy for you to put in that hold-all, because you never know.' Trying to be funny at Euston I asked an official which was the platform for New York. 'Number 15. Change at Liverpool' was the reply immediately snapped out at me. Arthur was full of anxieties and final instructions, and it was not until the train was gathering speed that I realized that he had forgotten to give me his flask. On arrival at Liverpool I fell in with the three educational delegates who were to travel with me. No city is at its best at six o'clock in the morning, and after a prowling round the streets until it was possible to get an hotel breakfast, we felt that we had sucked the pleasures of Liverpool dry, and were glad to go aboard.

Our boat was the *Adriatic*, never one of the latest type of ocean greyhound, I imagine, and now nearing its age for retirement. But to me it seemed both spacious and amusing. We were travelling second class and had a cabin between the four of us, and much happy time was consumed in arranging our luggage and exploring the vessel. Why this awkward wooden bar at the entrance to our cabin I asked, why little holders for the glasses, how do I get up into my berth, do we all wash out of this basin? As soon as we started all other interests were sunk in the delight of watching the sea, but

towards late afternoon I began to be what Jane Austen calls 'a little disordered', climbed up to my top berth, and didn't feel like climbing down again.

That was the first day. We were told that the voyage would take ten days, but they seemed like a hundred. I envied my companions who were able to get up, have meals, go on deck, and apparently enjoy themselves, and I sucked what amusement I could from watching their oddities. One slept extremely well and snored unfailingly. Another was of a literary turn and begged us not to gaze on her Dianic form while she washed. The third seemed to have an obsession about her belongings and was always rearranging her luggage. When they had gone up on deck I had the cabin to myself for the bulk of the day. It was then that I suffered from claustrophobia, in addition to my nausea. The top of our cabin was only about a foot above my head—quite bearable at night, but incredibly oppressive all day long. After a struggle down for a wash, up again I would climb, and get some distraction from 'noises without'. These consisted chiefly of the sounds of people hurrying to and fro, and I guessed that we must be between the dining-room and the kitchen, for amid the medley of shouting, snatches of popular songs, and the clash of washing-up, I discerned orders for food: 'Irish stew for a lady' (was this a small portion?) 'Dry 'ash four times.' I tried to picture what dry 'ash could possibly be, but am ignorant to this day; Arthur saw it on a restaurant menu some months later, and ordered it so that he might tell me, but said that he would rather not refer to the subject again. At night the sound of scrubbing predominated, except during one period of the voyage when the fog-horn drowned all music but its own. I rather liked this, for it suggested the possibility of a collision when the roof of the cabin might be broken. The stewardess was a cheerful body who said 'Yus' to everything, and I suppose she must have brought me something to swallow now and again. She assured me that I should be well by Wednesday, because people always were. Wednesday came and went, and I still lay there thinking of the riddle of my childhood that compared



the *Adriatic* to a dry attic. I thought too of the rich man's reply to his steward's 'What can I fetch you, Sir?'—'Fetch me an island.' I could raise a laugh over this, for I remembered from geography lessons that the good old Atlantic was five miles deep.

One afternoon as I lay there, going over such silly ideas and shutting my eyes against that terrible ceiling, I felt the unmistakable touch of a man's hand, laid, large and gentle, on mine. Turning my head I opened my eyes on a tall and kindly looking man in uniform.

'Who are you?' I asked, smiling with pleasure at any break to my thoughts.

'I'm the ship's doctor,' said he, 'and you must try to come up on deck, or you will be really ill.'

Cheered by his mere manner I struggled into some clothes and found some one to help me along the passages and up on to the deck again. How lovely was the fresh air and the sight of the sea, and the sound of the talk of the others. They welcomed me heartily, one wrapped a rug round me and another brought me a tot of brandy, and I knew then for the first time the magic effect of this godsend of a restorative. Time didn't hang so heavily now, but I think that Columbus himself was not more pleased at a sight of America than I to have Long Island pointed out to me, to see fireworks ashore and the varied lights of the shipping that we were passing. Sickness left me and I even made my way into the dining-room and ordered something to eat.

We docked early in the morning, and my first contact with America was the big customs-shed of New York. The officials were tall and leisurely, always sucking something and completely indifferent to any one's concerns. It gave me an absurd shock to hear them talking English quite easily, and me having come all that way! The four of us who had shared a cabin kept together for mutual protection, and ventured forth into the streets. They seemed much like those at home, only far noisier. We tried a little restaurant for lunch, and greatly amused the people by our ignorance of the strange coinage.

Refreshed, we began to look about, and presently one of us discovered through some advertisement that it was possible to go to Washington by train. We knew that Washington was the capital, but it seemed a long way off, and we had no notion that trains were common enough in America for people to go about casually as we did in England.

'But what about Chicago?' I demurred. 'We have to get there somehow, and Cook's man has told us how to.'

'Oh, but there's sure to be some kind of railway-line to get there from Washington,' argued the bolder spirit, 'and we may never in our lives have the chance to see Washington if we don't now. Oh do let's.'

So we all went to the station, after learning to our amusement that we must never ask for the 'station' (a very different place), but for the 'depot'. Here we found ourselves among a large number of passengers, just like one sees at Liverpool Street Station on any Saturday afternoon. Only in New York there was no agitated speculation as to which platform or what hour. Every one was seated comfortably in an airy waiting-room until the summons came for the train. 'Why can't we go on the platform,' I wondered. I soon saw the reason. There was no platform. We had to step up into the train from the line, or 'track' as they called it. Here were fresh surprises for us. Instead of the stuffy little upholstered compartments on our English railways (where people never agree as to how much fresh air may be let in) there were spacious, long, open carriages, where we could move about in comfort, change our seats so as to get different points of view, arrange our belongings, and make frequent excursions to the end of the car where iced water was provided free! We had hardly started when white-coated boys came along, proclaiming for sale all sorts of little luxuries—magazines, fans, tempting fruit, candy. . . . When I exclaimed that it seemed to me a kind of fairyland, one of our party argued that it was all very well for the Americans to have all these modern improvements, but it was the English who had started railways, and had to work off the old stock. I was obliged to concede this point, but felt more sympathy with her

next remark about the views from the windows, which compared unfavourably enough with our English country-side: she said that her respect for the Pilgrim Fathers was much increased, for they must have been extremely earnest about their religion to leave England for America. I wished we could have seen more of Philadelphia than we managed to spy from the railway, for Penn had always been one of my heroes.

However, Washington made up for all and exceeded my best expectations. In mid-July this lovely city was hotter than anything I had ever experienced, but was a dream of delight. White and green were the prevailing tones, from beautiful houses and huge trees. Spacious streets were being continually watered with great splashing hoses that made our little lumbering water-carts seem funny in comparison. There were few people about at that time of year, and our hotel was nearly empty, and hardly any attendants to be seen. After consulting with one another we rang for the chambermaid, and a negro appeared! But he was quite efficient for all we wanted. My chief need was a bath, and I never enjoyed one so much before or since. Then a real bed to lie down in. My first night in America will never fade from my memory.

We were up early the next morning to make the most of the few hours before we were to start for Chicago. The Capitol astounded us; we had no idea that the Americans knew how to build anything so large and impressive. But we were far more fascinated by the White House, a homely looking villa so near the roadway that we felt inclined to tap on the window and ask how they were getting on.

How silent and dignified the city seemed on that Sunday afternoon as we made our way to the depot to get our train for Chicago. But here we came upon a new phase of American life. The depot was all a-bustle with negroes starting on excursions. Believe me, I had always pictured negroes, if not naked, attired in the minimum, or in white garments of some slight kind. Here they were out-doing our 'Ampstead 'Arries and 'Arriets in the colour and extravagant splendour of their holiday clothes. I had a chat with a woman who was carrying a

real live black baby in a snow-white dress. She was pleased at my admiring the little fellow, and let me hold him a bit. I was sorry to leave Washington.

Our first point of excitement on the journey was Harper's Ferry. This romantic spot actually existed, and there we were, passing through it quite casually. Our enthusiasm amused our fellow passengers, some of whom appeared to know less about John Brown than we did. I was struck with the extreme readiness of these people to talk to us and start a temporary friendship. My own family had always been inclined to chat with a traveller at any time, but our chattiness was cool reserve compared to that of Americans. At first I was a little on the defensive, but soon began to enjoy and appreciate this general friendliness. After all it's the best way to 'see' a country, and get various opinions and meet new people; and there was the ever-blessed link of a common language. A common language, yes, but every one spotted us as English. 'How do you know I'm English?' I asked a pleasant sea-captain who begged to join us at our tea in the 'parlour car', and entertained us with yarns from a world-wide experience. His reply was immediate: 'By your way of talking and by your bright complexion.' It was news to me that I had either.

When dusk fell our negro porter came to make up our couches for the night. Now I had not been anything but hot since leaving New York, and I besought him not to pile on the rugs. 'You're hot now,' said he, 'but wait till we are going over the Alleghanies, and see if you don't pull them round you.' I lay down and enjoyed the quiet evening effect as the sun was setting over the hills, and then there came over me that odd feeling (that has always attacked me at intervals) of being alone in the world, and I began to wonder what on earth I was doing careering over a strange continent. Not for long; the negro was right; the night grew cold, and rolling myself up in my rugs I fell happily asleep.

In the morning we managed to have a sketchy kind of wash in the train. It was badly needed, for the soot on a railway journey in America was like nothing we get in England. Great

lumps of soot nestled into our clothes. Our captain explained it as due to the softness of the coal, so nothing could be done about it. We were indeed sorry to say good-bye to this Captain Riley, who was going on, while we had to change for Chicago. We talked eagerly of the meal we intended to have at the junction, picturing a kind of Bristol refreshment room, for the tea in the 'parlour car' had not been very sustaining, and it was now eight o'clock in the morning. But Cincinnati Junction turned out to be no more than a wooden track, with a small shed on it. This shed was evidently a refreshment-room, but all that was left to eat consisted of two buns on a glass dish. 'How much are these buns?' said I to the woman presiding over them. Staring at me she exclaimed in rich nasal twang, 'How funny you do talk!' When I laughed and said that we had come from an outlandish place called England, she said we could have the buns for nothing (although she called them by some other word which I forget). These didn't go far to stay the hunger of the four of us, and as we were wondering rather dismally where and when our next meal would be, in came the Chicago express. We had hardly taken our seats when a white-robed waiter stalked along the train, proclaiming in each car the joyful news: 'Breakfast is served in the rear car.' Course after course was placed before us, including fruit, porridge and cream, omelettes, fish, and cutlets. We enjoyed as much as the swaying of the train allowed us to convey to our mouths, and with much laughter we agreed that the waiter deserved a good tip, although the price of the breakfast itself was a bit staggering. I said that I had plenty of change and would see to the tip. A shilling seemed to me handsome enough, and I left on the table what I took to be a shilling, but I noticed as we were leaving the car that the waiter looked anything but pleased, and it was not till several hours later that I realized the value of the nickel I had so generously given him.

We felt that another meal in that train was beyond our means, and arrived at Chicago at about 6.30 in the evening, very tired, dirty, and hungry. Different places for boarding had been assigned to us, so our foursome party was split up.

Two of us were to be lodged at the University, and looked forward with confidence to an immediate and pleasant reception. We pictured the University as a dignified cluster of colleges in some prominent part of the town, as well known to the inhabitants as King's is to Cambridge people. Having been warned that cabmen were apt to be extortionate we thought to economize by taking the elevated railway, but there was no ready response when we asked for tickets to take us as near the University as possible. Each person consulted recommended a different station to aim at. So we tried one after another along the line, looking out in vain for anything that suggested a university. Back and forth we went, and it was now getting dark. One fellow traveller strongly recommended the Exhibition station, and although anything more unlike a university than an exhibition it was hard to imagine, we determined to get out and give the idea a trial. We started off walking along several unmade roads deep in dust, getting no nearer anywhere promising. I was wearing the slippers into which I had changed for the railway journey, and they were hardly the thing for a suburban walk in Chicago in the dark. Ploughing through one road I left a shoe stuck in the soil, and as I retrieved it I thought of Tadpole's similar accident and laughed. 'There's nothing to laugh at,' said my companion. 'We don't want to be out here all night, and there's not even a cab to be had in this region.' Just then I spied a kind of open café, with lights and people moving about. We went in and told them our plight. They were very kind and brought out a map of Chicago. Accustomed to the complexity of London, with its muddle but at least a few main streets, I was defeated by this chess-board of straight roads crossing one another at right angles and all apparently of equal importance, and numbered like convicts. But those in the know read it quite easily, and our good Samaritans soon found that the University was indeed close to the Exhibition. So we must have been circling round it all the time.

What with the soot of the railway and the dust of the streets we felt quite unfit for a dignified arrival at the University. We

needn't have worried; there was a warm welcome for us from those who had already arrived and were getting anxious about us; there was a copious supper covered by netting to keep the flies off; various kinds of baths and bed-rooms; and all troubles were soon drowned in sound sleep. Next morning I was quickly at my window to see my surroundings by daylight. When I saw the extremely new buildings and the wooden planks laid on the ground for people to walk from one to another, I began to see that the whole thing was still 'in the making', and to wonder no longer that the bulk of the people of Chicago had not yet heard of their university. After all, I reflected, even Oxford itself must have been new once, or at least parts of it now and then, like Keble; and I tried to picture what Chicago University would be like in a few thousand years.

I went down to breakfast and found the supper-room of the night before a noisy scramble of catch-as-catch-can. But there was plenty to eat and general camaraderie among the strangers from all quarters who were boarded in the University—some fifty in number. The Educational Congress was being held in a large building in another part of the town, and a party of us started off all business-like with note-books. I ran back to fetch something from my room and was shocked to find my bed being made by a negro. It was not that he was a negro, but that a man should be doing such a domestic and intimate job . . . a job that I used to do for my brothers, but the other way about seemed all wrong. When I breathed my discomfiture to the others they laughed and told me I should soon get used to it. But I never did, and kept well away when this menial task was due.

Our short daily journey was on the Illinois Central overhead railway. The little stations and carriages were all primitive and ramshackly; there were no doors at all to the compartments; we were kept in by a long iron bar which was worked by the guard: he would pull it back at each station for a few moments, for people to get in or out, and they had to nip about quickly for fear of being caught by the bar in transit. In principle it

was like our modern sliding doors on the Tube, but how different in practice!

Any one who has ever looked in at an Educational Conference needs no description of it. The same uplifting speeches are delivered at them all, no doubt the same that bored the Athenians and drove the Romans to the Baths. Of the many that we endured at Chicago I have memories of only two: a rousing, straight-from-the-shoulder, human address from Commissioner Harris; and the curious contrast of a paper read by the Russian Prince Sergius, whose deliberate style and old-world polish enchanted me. Most of the American speakers took themselves more seriously than English people do, and were correspondingly more wearisome. The real value of such conferences lies in the discussions in corridors and side-rooms, at lunches and teas, when teachers will confess to strangers what they really do do, where they have despaired, and where succeeded a bit. They recommend books to one another and pore together over the publishers' stalls. In Chicago these were good, and I made many casual friends while discussing and buying. Teachers had come from great distances and were obviously enjoying a good time, perhaps their best holiday for many years. I think Chaucer would find good scope to-day for more tales among these modern pilgrims, and instead of the old slogan 'St. Thomas is the best doctor' we might have a new one—'An Educational Conference is the best doctor'—for it gives teachers a change physically and mentally, if it is only to see the absurdity of their own solemnity.

Those few of us who were English graduates were referred to as *alumnae*, and were amused to find ourselves lionized and invited hither and thither. I actually spent a week-end at the home of a wealthy Chicago merchant, who had a 'place' on the lake-side. This was my one and only chance to be for longer than an hour or two inside a real American home, and it was quite unlike what I expected. The house was large and 'well appointed' in every way, but there was total lack of domestic service, even of 'coloured help'. Meals were on a big scale, but the mother cooked, and we all fetched what we wanted,



cleared away, washed up, and so on, with great fun. This struck me as a far more satisfactory arrangement than one finds in some English households, where there is more service than things served. My chief pleasure was in their only child, a little girl of four who did her best to get in the way of everybody and make me romp with her on the grand staircase.

One other example of American hospitality stands out in my memory. A Mrs. Catsinger, of Austin, invited a few of us one afternoon to meet her husband and children and some American *alumnae*. We didn't go into the house, but were entertained in a large garden, where quite a poetical meal was served as we 'sat around'. A full-sized English butler with his satellites brought salads and ices and most unusual little cakes of a dainty kind, as well as varied drinks. Conversation was at a high level, but not heavy or self-conscious; as an intellectual treat it was the best I had in Chicago.

As an extreme contrast to this I recall a visit to what was called a Chatauqua meeting, a kind of blend of education and religion. To these people the teaching of the young seemed to be too solemn and important to talk about calmly, and I was obliged to come away quite hurriedly.

Our two chief amusements, when the rigours of the conference were over for the day, were the Exhibition and shopping. To examine the shop-windows of a strange town is an unfailing source of recreation to a Londoner. I was puzzled by these in Chicago. Drapery was easy to find, but there appeared to be no simple bakers or grocers or chemists. I wanted some biscuits, and tried to describe them to a kindly shopkeeper. It is really harder to describe a biscuit than you would think. 'Oh,' he exclaimed at last, 'what you want is crackers.' 'No, no,' I protested, picturing the bon-bons of Christmas time. But he was right, and I learnt another American word. We should have spent more time in prowling about the city and watching people at work, if the streets had not been so filthy with spitting. No English person would believe how bad it was, requiring us to pick every step we took on the pavements in even the best streets. And in the trams it was

far worse, because there was less accommodation for the disgusting habit. So we generally gravitated to the World's Fair, which was kept, by some unknown means, beautifully clean, in spite of the crowds of people. But cleanliness isn't everything, and I missed the tang of Chicago's reality. Just like conferences, all exhibitions and fairs are very much alike—grand white temporary palaces, artificial lake, lit by fairy lights, Javan and Indian villages (one native village was rather too realistic with its war-cries), Saratoga gold-mine, glass-blowing, gun-making, and a big Transportation building. The midway Plaisance afforded endless side-shows (including 'a peep at your future home' and a Congress of Beauty). Restaurants at every corner were convenient and tempting but ruinously expensive. A phonograph band produced a more hideous noise than any I had previously known. On the whole I preferred the dirty streets, but was certainly shocked at the river of Chicago, in which I think a spoon would easily have stood up.

So far as we could discover there was no important 'sight' in Chicago that visitors were supposed to 'do'. The only special thing that we had associated with the town was the pork factory, but we had been warned not on any account to visit the stock-yard, because the killing of the pigs was an insufferable sight. Of course we had heard that the organization was so complete that the pig walked in at one end and came out at the other in the form of sausages. Two of our party felt that such marvellous management must be well worth seeing, and really *ought* to be investigated, if Chicago was to be thoroughly visited. So they went to the office and explained to the man in charge that they wished to see something of the processes, but to avoid the actual scene of the killing. 'Sure,' said he, scenting no doubt that he had some elegant hypersensitive English ladies to deal with, and immediately he ushered them straight into the slaughter-house, where some thousand pigs were being dispatched. They rushed away and were really ill for a few hours. I had a sneaking sympathy with that man.

As soon as the conference was over our party was expected to return to England. Two of us, however, felt inclined to see some more of the continent, now we had come so far. We both had friends in Canada who had invited us to pay them a visit, and it was simply flying in the face of Providence not to go. My friend started off at once for Winnipeg, but I was only going as far as Toronto and was able to stay with the rest of our party a little longer. Our route was planned to give us a short stay at the Niagara Falls. I think we were all sorry to say good-bye to Chicago, where we had begun to feel at home, and started off on our night journey quite reluctantly. Early in the morning our train was halted to give the passengers a view of the Falls. This seemed to me extremely funny. In England one looked upon a train's business as serious—speed—getting there—that was the main consideration; the idea of stopping to look at a beauty spot was merely frivolous. Nor on reflection did I think it good policy if Americans wanted mere passers-by to see the Falls. From the train they were as disappointing as a first glimpse of Stonehenge seems to any one going by in a car. One has to come close to these monsters before one can feel the terrifying effect they must have had on the worshippers of the sun-god. And so with Niagara; it was only after we had been for an hour or two in an hotel overlooking the Falls and within sound of their roar that their grandeur seized us. While we were strolling round, getting various points of view and looking down into the whirlpool in which Captain Webb lost his life, we discovered that it was possible (for the sum of two dollars) to go right under one of the Falls. Why boggle at two dollars, we thought, for such a glory?

Accordingly the three of us went into a little wooden cabin, stripped off all our clothes and got into mackintoshes provided for us. Then we went into a rather crazy-looking lift and were lowered to the base of the Fall. Here we stepped out and followed our guide. He led us over a stony way and soon we were right under the great cataract of water. The noise was now deafening. Although well accustomed to jumping from

boulder to boulder on the Cornish shore, I found these slippery rocks far worse. We were not roped, and in the semi-darkness I was aware that the least mistake of a step would send one down into the ugly backwash of the river swirling round us. I lost my nerve and yelled to the guide to take us back, but the noise was so great that I might as well have yelled to the moon. Fortunately the others had not heard me either, and were sturdily following me. In fact there was no possible means of turning safely however much we had wanted to. So, facing up to the idea that any moment might be my last, I fixed my gaze on the guide's broad back and trod forward. What a relief it was to come out from the gloom and roar, and to be able to take hold of something wooden. There is something human and comforting in the touch of wood. Is this a relic of our simian past? On looking back on that expedition, however, I think that our next bit of walk was quite as crazy an undertaking as the struggle over the wet rocks. A series of planks was placed over the foot of the Fall, and provided with a hand-rail, and along this 'bridge' we made our way amid the foam back again to our lift. There was no room for thoughts of danger, for we were quite overcome with the beauty of the scene. We looked right up at the mass of falling water dazzling white in the sunshine, with an undertone of emerald. No view from the top could ever have come near it. When the hotel clerks and visitors heard where we had been they declared that nothing would induce them to go down. We felt quite distinguished, especially as we had been given certificates to show beyond doubt that we had actually gone under the Fall.

On the next day I parted from my original cabin companions—they were for New York and England, and I took ship for Toronto, where I was to be met by my Canadian host and hostess.

## IV

### *I Find Robinson Crusoe*

#### § 1

CANADA was easy. As I cruised across the lake to Toronto I felt almost like going home. I knew all about Canada. Not only *Ungava*, but *Hiawatha* and all Red Indian romances and legends and *The Last of the Mohicans*. . . . I had given all of them a Canadian setting. Then there was Wolfe, and I knew that everything was safely English.

The people I was to meet were complete strangers to me, introduced by the member of Bedford College Council who had 'supported' me. My host, Mr. Kyle, was her cousin, and I concluded that he would be of the same wealthy and influential type. In his letter giving me instructions where to meet him he said that he lived in a small village on the shores of Lake Ontario. Its name, Oakville, had an unpleasingly hybrid sound, but what did that matter? I pictured a village on the lines of a hundred English ones . . . old church, old inn, thatched cottages, village green with an old oak-tree and a pump. These people, oddly enough, actually lived in the inn . . . probably with low ceilings, old rafters, uneven floors. Again the name was a bit disconcerting—the International Hotel—rather pretentious for a village, I thought, but many inns had absurd names. The idea of being near the lake was a great attraction, for my loveliest thoughts of Canada had always been connected with the Canadian boat song, a dreamy thing we used to sing at school.

My mind was a confused medley of such expectations when I was met on the quay at Toronto by Mr. and Mrs. Kyle, and shipped off immediately on another steamer for Oakville. I was at once disabused of the idea of 'wealth and influence' in my new friends. Mr. Kyle was very tall and thin, dressed in homely 'slacks' and a hat with an immense brim. His sunburn

was of the kind that suggests continual open-air life. His speech was drawling and punctuated with spitting, and his tobacco of such a nature that I kept as much to windward of him as I could without appearing to. At all points he struck me as *real*, and I took an immediate liking to him. His wife was a curious contrast, giving an air of unreality to all she said and did. Both her speech and clothes sat uncomfortably on her. It wasn't long before I discovered the reason: while he was a thoroughbred Englishman, she was a Canadian; while he had adopted Canadian life whole-heartedly and seemed to care not a snap for England, she was for ever striving to be the complete English lady.

They were both undisguisedly relieved at my appearance and manner. Almost at once they confessed that they had dreaded my visit, imagining an English girl not only learned, but full of 'frills'—a word they used to describe English fastidiousness and standoffishness. Our short run on the steamer convinced Mr. Kyle that he could be himself, and Mrs. Kyle that she need not strain so much.

We arrived at a formal little new landing-stage, and were immediately in the 'village', which was quite unlike any English one I had ever seen. The 'cottages' consisted of neat wooden shanties laid out along neat roads in square formation, as though a future Chicago had been envisaged. There were pretty gardens, but so neat, so unlike the glorious medley of flowers sprawling about the approaches to our cottages. The International Hotel was a tall, ugly, new building, but happily free from any attempt at architectural ornament. Quietly shedding my disappointment I embraced the idea that I was seeing something new and strange—an American city in its birth throes. So when Mr. Kyle asked me what I would like to see or do, I said, 'Let me potter about with you and just look'.

His first suggestion was that we should go for a row, as he had some business at a mill. The combination of a row and a mill—nothing could better fit my fancy. And I was delighted to find that he headed, not towards the tame-looking lake, but to

a creek, wide and deep, of irregular course, with richly wooded banks and with water-lilies in it. Moored to the bank was the family boat, into which we all got. The Kyles had one son, aged about ten, their only child, born to them after twenty years of married life, about whom naturally there was much maternal anxiety; where exactly he was, how clothed, and what eating, absorbed most of his mother's mental life; but he was quite hearty, pert, and could spit almost as well as his father. Well, the boat was capacious enough to hold us all and more. Out of idle politeness I commented on its good qualities. 'Glad you like it,' said Mr. Kyle, 'for it's all our own make.' Yes, he had made the boat single-handed, its oars and all its appurtenances. Here was Robinson Crusoe in person. I no longer regretted that my surroundings were not like England. Thankful that I had learnt to row in Wales, I offered to take an oar, and managed it to his satisfaction, but to the obvious terror of Mrs. Kyle, who feared the worst for her boy. Some distance up the creek we moored the boat so that I might be shown a pleasant walk among the woods. Here we came upon a splendid patch of wild raspberries, all ripe for eating, and the only check to our complete enjoyment was the constant cry to the boy not to eat too many.

A mill has always had a fascination for me since the days of my childhood when I loved to plunge my arms up to the elbows in the grain as it came rushing down the wooden shoot of the old Cornish mill. This Canadian mill was more modern in its methods, but doing just the same work. The miller's man seemed quite pleased to have an interested spectator, and showed me the flour in all its stages, and the precise purpose of each wheel. He allowed me to stencil names on the sacks, to fill a sack with flour, and to tie one up.

A day or two later Mr. Kyle brought in a mass of fish he had caught, chiefly perch and bass, and announcing that he was going into the yard to skin and clean them, asked me to come and help him. Mrs. Kyle was shocked at my being asked to do such a thing; but I was for trying everything I could, and readily joined him. It was nasty, dirty work, but I stuck

to it. He then told me that I had made a great impression on the people round by merely enjoying myself, and that I had 'made a mash of the miller's man'. Mr. Kyle was a jolly companion, and as far as I was concerned he had only two drawbacks. One was that he measured the value of everything in dollars—the cost of a thing, that was always the main point, and sometimes I felt that if I heard the word dollar again I should scream. His other failing was to disparage everything English. No sooner did I speak of some building or process or improvement that I had seen lately in England than he would say, 'Oh, that's a back number; you should see what we have over here in Canada.' This annoyed me at first, and I argued the point, but his trick became so frequent that I either laughed or took no notice or heartily agreed with him. I discovered, to my amusement, that agreement with him annoyed him far more than contradiction. Once, when he had been particularly militant against England, I asked which of the poor old country's failings had driven him to Canada (where he had now been for twenty years). 'Rheumatism,' was his reply. 'But you have it very cold here in Canada, don't you?' said I. 'Cold, yes, but dry; not the damp cold I used to get at home. In England if you put clothes away dry they get wet, but in Canada if you put them away wet they get dry.' I felt sorry at the moment that I had made him recall his past illness, but that conversation explained a lot. I believe that at heart he was really homesick, and attacked everything English in order to hear me defend it. In a word, he was an exile, with the knowledge that a return would be a death sentence. In later years I have come to think that the world must be dotted over with poor fellows trying desperately to make out that the land of their adoption is superior to England.

One afternoon I felt bold enough to ask him if I might try my hand at fishing, when I saw him starting off for the creek with his tackle. Although I had watched it often enough I had never attempted it, supposing it far too sacred a business to be undertaken in a light spirit. I was at once supplied with the necessaries, and with beginner's luck I caught four good-



But he assumed a more business-like air again after the laugh, and went on measuring this and that, and giving me quite sound advice without any compliments. I expect he had become pretty quick at deducing personal traits as he chatted with any one. He warned me against doing things in a hurry, such as jumping on moving cars and trying to do two things at once (thereby often giving myself more work). Hurry was my chief enemy, and I was specially to beware of spending money in a hurry, and of throwing good money after bad. If I could only have borne his good advice in mind it would have repaid me many times over the dollar I laid out for it.

My Londoner's love of shop-gazing led me inevitably to examine the few windows that Oakville displayed. One specially attracted me, for within I could see a cobbler in the act of making a pair of boots. After watching him in silence for some time I apologized for staring, and explained it as due to interest in his job. I had only to open my mouth to say anything in America to cause surprise and welcome at once. 'You come from England!' he exclaimed, 'Do you know Yorkshire?' I felt like saying with the indignant little French boy, when asked if he knew Paris, 'Si je connais Paris!' I soon persuaded him that I knew Yorkshire by talking familiarly of the main interests of York, Middlesbrough, Whitby, Saltburn, and lots of smaller places, including Danby Wiske (to his ecstasy). He had left his job to fetch out a Darlington and Stockton paper and a map of Yorkshire.

'Mrs. Nicolas, my wife here,' said he, calling her to come, 'is English too, only she won't admit it because she says the Cornish are not English.'

It was my turn for ecstasy. 'Cornish!' I cried, 'So am I. Where? What part? What was your name?'

When she said that she was a Curno of Lelant I could have fallen on her neck. Lelant! That most Cornish of Cornish villages, with its 'little grey church on a windy hill'. What with Yorkshire and Cornwall we had so much to say that they suggested my coming to tea with them on the following day. This seemed a good plan and I set off at four o'clock expecting a cup

of tea and a long talk. The long talk was certainly provided, but instead of a 'cup of tea' there was a substantial meal laid in the tiny room at the back of the shop, and I saw why Mrs. Nicholas had required a day's interval for preparation. There was an uncut joint of cold beef with tomatoes, ripe raspberries and clotted cream, and the specially Cornish apple-cakes and saffron buns. Both she and her husband were bursting with hospitality and real affection. I promised to go to Lelant on my very first visit to Cornwall on my return, and I was entrusted with a pot of home-made jam to take to her mother. (I may add that all this I faithfully performed, and found old Mrs. Curno as warm-hearted as her daughter.)

Although I had turned my back on England for the time, I was glad enough of these happy links with it. The one thing entirely English that I would most willingly have forgone was the Canadian observance of Sunday. The church, of course, was a new nondescript building, to which I was led as a sheep to the slaughter by Mrs. Kyle, attired in her best bonnet and squeezed into gloves. Together we endured one of the duller services of my wide experience in this line. When I remarked on it as we came out, and wondered why she didn't follow her husband's example and do a bit of meditating in the sun, she replied, 'I always go; it puts my conscience right and I feel that I have been blessed.' This sounded hopeful, and I reckoned that perhaps the afternoon would develop into some frivolity. But Mrs. Kyle preserved her pious demeanour, which generated a kind of truculence in her husband, and the afternoon yawned ahead. While she was reading a good book and forbidding her son to do whatever he was doing, Mr. Kyle approached me with an 'aside': 'What about a stroll down to the lake?' Off we went; he knew his Oakville; there was a hot sun and a stiffish breeze, the little port was alive with yachts, and all the abandoned portion of the village had come down to see what was going on. An expanse of blue water and a cloudless sky were all that nature had contributed to the scene, but Mr. Kyle exclaimed, 'Now this *is* a lake! Not like your little duckpond of a Windermere.' 'You are quite right,' I replied.

'I see no resemblance at all.' But just at that moment I saw right away on the horizon the foam of Niagara, being tossed up by the breeze, and called his attention to it with, '*There's* something to boast of, if you like!'

Presently we saw, in addition to the group of idlers admiring a huge catch of bass, a small company of earnest-looking people mustering at the water's edge. The word went round that they were Baptists about to hold a baptism. I had heard from a Baptist friend of mine that it was their custom to immerse the candidate entirely, and she had shown me the vast marble bath for the purpose in her chapel; but I had never really believed it. So now I watched eagerly to see what sort of compromise they made in actual practice. Two pastors and two candidates got into a rowing-boat and pushed off to a distance of about a hundred yards. They were all in mackintoshes, and sure enough the young people were ducked completely. Whatever of dignity might have conceivably been connected with this ritual under happier conditions was entirely absent in this case. To our disgust several of the local idlers had also got into boats and rowed out to jeer. We could only hope that the Baptists were too much absorbed in religious thoughts to be aware of what was going on around them.

The next day, in the evening, I had an attack of home-sickness, and while Mrs. Kyle was busy collecting her son and cajoling him to bed I looked round for some quiet corner to be by myself. The only available refuge, strangely, was the smoking-room. This was a gloomy den of a place, unpatronized by the men of the house, who smoked their vile pipes all over the hotel. Taking a book and the last letter I had received from Arthur I repaired to this little ark. The letter had been written in the Dolgelly Assize Court, where 'a case had been going on for hours that would have been knocked out in ten minutes up in London'. There were other things in the letter that made my home-sickness no better, so I thrust it back into its envelope and began to reckon how long it would be before I got back to Wales. Just then a man came in and sat down for a smoke. I was relieved to see that it was a cigarette—a rare

thing in those surroundings. I was also relieved that he didn't start the usual immediate conversation, and relapsed into my dreams. After a while I was almost startled when the silence was broken by an Oxford voice:

'Excuse me, but is that an English stamp I glimpse on your letter?'

'Yes, it is,' said I, 'although it comes from Wales. Would you care to look at it more closely?' and I handed him the envelope.

'Thank you,' said he, 'that does me good, a real sight for sore eyes, for I'm suffering from a bout of home-sickness.'

When I confessed the same and how glad I was to smell a good cigarette and hear an English voice, we began to compare notes on this and that, and I was soon enjoying full compensation for Mr. Kyle's sneers at the old country. The stranger was a resident in Toronto, Mr. Arnold Haultain, private secretary to the well-known Goldwin-Smith (and later on his biographer). He said he was destined to be an exile for life, and an occasional visit to London was the utmost he could hope for. He envied me so much that I felt ashamed of making a grievance of my short absence. He was amused at my objection to Canada: its chief drawback, I maintained, was its likeness to England—you kept on expecting it to be English, and finding it only a caricature; whereas the States were original and full-blooded. He promised to send me some of his own literary work, articles on various subjects and poetry, and we agreed to meet in London on his next visit (which we did).

After we had exchanged cards he said, 'May I know what book you have on your lap? Or will it make me worse?'

'Worse, I fear; it's my pocket *Hamlet*. I take it everywhere with me as a kind of——'

'Prophylactic?'

At this we both laughed and launched forth into a discussion of our common literary tastes. It grew dark, and he rose to go; pausing at the door, he turned round and said with a courtly bow, 'For this relief, much thanks'.

## § 2

The time was come for me to rejoin my travelling companion at Toronto, and Mr. Kyle escorted me over the lake in order to show me 'the finest town in the world'. I fell in with all his opinions, freely admitting that the main street was far larger and grander than Regent Street. In spite of his absurd adulation I found it a beautiful town. We took a five-cent belt-line trip right round it, if the word 'round' is correct, for all arrangement in America seems to be square. The special charm to me was the openness of the private gardens. No fences or hedges or walls anywhere. 'Don't small boys pick the flowers?' I asked, and Mr. Kyle explained that no one stole the flowers or trampled the grass plots because every citizen acted as a policeman. I thought how much pleasure our suburban gardens might give to town dwellers if we did away with our excluding barriers, not to mention the ugly iron railings round the London squares.

We had a bit of business to do in the town. Mr. Kyle had insisted that I must go back to England first class, and indeed I was only too willing to be persuaded; so we changed my second cabin ticket for a saloon on the *New York*. After this effort we had lunch in a style quite new to me; we sat on high stools at a long counter and had a great variety of funny dishes to choose from. Dutiful visits to Dr. Ross's Normal School and the University, and a row on the lake brought the day to an end with meeting my friend at the Queen's Hotel, and a farewell to Mr. Kyle.

Our plan was to go to Quebec, and next morning early we took ship in the *Spartan*, quite appropriately named as it turned out. My imagination had been running riot over the 'Thousand Isles'. One of my childish dreams of delight had been to live on a little island, with neighbours all around on similar islands, to step into my boat to pay a call or do shopping or just potter about. I understood that the part of the river we were to pass through was dotted with such ideal residences, and that we should see the people pottering about in their

boats. To my bitter disappointment it was a day of drenching rain. Not a lift all day. The saloon was not pleasant, so we sat on deck huddled up in rugs and mackintoshes. The ship's dinner was too spartan to arouse appetite. However, there was still the shooting of the Lachine Rapids to come, and that was better even than the islands. 'The rapids are near and the daylight's past'—the words were running in my head when the news went round that the evening was too dark for shooting the rapids! It was the first day that this had happened for the whole season. We were all bundled out at a railway station, but as there was no train, nor hope of one, we were all bundled in again, to be taken to Montreal by the canal. This meant a far longer time, and the *Spartan* had no meal provided for the now hungry passengers. This was the last straw in a day of disappointments. But, as it happened, it proved to be one of the merriest of my experiences. A 'free supper' was proclaimed, and every morsel of food on board was brought forth, and served round in the saloon with the impartial justice of a survival from shipwreck. Our appetites were no longer nice, every one was good-tempered, and even the stewards laughed at our gratitude for a bun or a potato that we should have despised earlier in the day. I remember the excellence of an orange that fell to my share.

Since everything was out of order, there was great confusion on the wharf when we arrived at Montreal, and for some time the gangway couldn't be got across. We drove to the Quebec-going wharf only to find that our boat had already started. So we took the C.P.R. night train, curled up in a day car, and fell fast asleep. How queer it was to see Quebec written up on a board, as if it were no more than some suburban station. We took a *calèche* to the Florence Hotel, and spent the day prowling about the strange ups and downs of the old town. The breakneck steps and the curious old shops, where one had to ask for things in French—this was the real Canada that I had wanted to see. Fortunately I was able to go exactly where I liked, for my friend had lost one of her many trunks in the confusions of the previous day and was absorbed in inquiries for it.

The following morning at breakfast, while we were discussing which of the many historical places we should go to see on the one day at our disposal, two Yankees at an adjoining table overheard our remarks, came up to us and said that they too were on a short visit, didn't know where to go, and would we join them if they hired a carriage and told the man to drive us round to some interesting spots? My friend was obviously suspicious of the arrangement and put up a strong case that she really ought to be making further endeavours to find her missing trunk. 'Oh, bother your trunk,' said I, 'come along and forget it.' I hustled her off to get ready while the carriage was being ordered. 'I think we are very unwise,' said she, 'to accept a favour from these vulgar men.' 'They aren't vulgar,' said I, 'they are just real Yankees come here for a holiday like us. They are obviously well off, and we shall afford them entertainment merely by being so different from themselves; I expect that's why they asked us.'

Certainly I got immense amusement from watching them on our drive. It was my first close-up acquaintance with the real article of which I had heard and read so much. Their tone of voice was the richest twang I had come across; they had goatee beards, diamond breast-pins, and rings, and addressed one another as Doctor and Colonel. They smoked strong cigars the whole time and, of course, spat freely. As I looked at them I didn't believe it—it was all too much like the comic papers. I chatted away to them, in order to make up for my friend's rather reserved manner; but there was no need, for I think they were amply amused and pleased with her, no doubt thinking that they had encountered a genuine specimen of the real stand-offish English lady.

The morning excursion was to the Montmorency Falls, where the 'doctor' and I ventured to the foot, down steep, slippery wooden steps that had lately given way, and were rather crazy. It was a cloudy morning with some rain, but the good lunch to which we were entertained and a sunny afternoon put us in capital spirits as we drove to the Plains of Abraham. Here we saw one of the most moving monuments in the world, the

column with 'Wolfe' inscribed on one side, and 'Montcalm' on the other. It meant a lot to us, but the Yankees 'didn't just remember what battle that was'. Still more interesting to me was to see the cove where Wolfe climbed up so stealthily, but it meant nothing at all to the Yankees. They may not have known much history, but they certainly knew how to be hospitable to strangers, and we parted from them with warm thanks.

We hated having to leave Quebec, but we were due to take ship that evening for Montreal. The St. Lawrence was looking superb in the summer evening light, as we sat on deck admiring the broad expanse of calm water and the wooded banks. A special dinner at the captain's table was followed by a tour of the vessel, including the engine-room, conducted by the captain himself. Then one of the passengers showed me a copy of *Puck*, explaining the jokes I didn't understand and also those I did. I thought it a good name for a comic paper, but didn't think that its contents lived up to it. I went to my bunk reluctantly, sorry to waste any part of the journey along the St. Lawrence in sleep, and was up early to greet Montreal.

Sunday morning was an appropriate time to arrive in the 'city of churches' and we sampled several of them, including Notre Dame, the Jesuits' church, the Wesleyan church, and the English cathedral, staying for a part of the service in each. In the cathedral they sang my favourite *Te Deum*, which had the extra charm of the familiar amid strange surroundings. After this the sermon in the Wesleyan place was a painful drop, and we didn't stay to hear it through.

In the afternoon we were able to understand the beautiful meaning of the word 'Montreal', for we went for a drive up the Royal Mount, and through the Catholic and Protestant cemeteries. It dawned on me then why there were so many churches in the city—doubtless owing to the rivalry between the many sects, even more numerous than at home. But up on the Mount we were above them all, and could *see* the whole city as I have never seen one before or since. It was a gentle hazy mass of red houses, interspersed with trees and the slender



church spires. Beyond was the St. Lawrence. Odd bits of geography lessons, so dull at school, came to my mind. I had learnt that the St. Lawrence carries more water to the sea than any other river, and so might be called the greatest in the world, and I looked on its calm expanse with awe. And what a lovely setting the city had! Beyond the great river with its wooded islands was a richly cultivated plain and in the distance were blue and grey hills. The river was spanned by an unbelievably long bridge (our driver said it was 'going on for two miles'). Altogether it was a scene to remember for a lifetime. I wished I had taken my sketch-book with me, but had to be content with a rough impression of the city that I managed to get from the window of our St. Lawrence Hall Hotel.

We had only one more day, and I was determined to shoot the Lachine Rapids. I could never go home and say I had missed them in a paltry canal. With difficulty I persuaded my friend to go with me by a Grand Trunk train and return on the steamer. I hoped it would take her mind off the trunk anxiety, which neither the voyage on the St. Lawrence nor the cathedral service nor the view from the Royal Mount had been able to allay. 'After all,' said I, 'it's only one small trunk that you have lost. Why not enjoy a little life while the poor thing is trying to reach you?'

I wouldn't have missed that shooting of the rapids for anything. It's true that I had always pictured the 'shooting' in a canoe, with a Red Indian captain, but the steamer was quite exciting enough. It plunged along light-heartedly over appalling places, and several times I was certain that it simply *must* strike the rock at which it was aiming directly—but no, it glanced off miraculously just at the fateful moment. It may have been inconvenient for navigation that the river took it into its head to narrow in this part, but it provided no end of fun. We now had a closer view of the great tubular bridge, as we slid peacefully under it after the hazards of the rapids. Although it had been built so strong in order to resist the flow of water and the pressure of ice at one season of the year, it looked to me as if it might come down any minute. Indeed, the rapids seemed safer.

'We haven't done our duty in the educational line here,' I said, as we were spending the afternoon in a final stroll round the town. 'Let's ask this clergyman to show us something of the kind.' He was only too pleased, and took us over M'Gill College. It was not term time, but we saw some fine apparatus for scientific experiments in the technological school, and we were supplied with information and papers about the University. As though in reward for our dutiful afternoon we found on return to the hotel that the lost trunk had arrived. At once its owner was all smiles and apologies for the ill-temper she had shown during the period when the little trunk had been off by itself. But, funnily enough, her rejoicing enraged me more than her previous gloom, for it was out of all proportion to the event. I had had enough of her and her trunk. Breaking to her that my passage home had been altered, I told her that I should not travel with her that night, but go by a different route on the following morning. I went to see her off by the C.P.R. and I suppose my cheerfulness broke through, for she said, 'I believe you are glad that I'm leaving you.' Knowing that truth is the greatest deceiver I replied gaily, 'Yes, indeed I am.' She was a good bit older than I, and consequently was full of compunction at leaving me alone on the continent. 'Alone on the continent!' The idea went to my head like wine. I was free. I laughed on my way back to the hotel at the absurdity of having all America to play about in. For a first venture from England this seemed good.

## V

*Boston, Mass.*

WHILE parting so gaily from my fellow traveller I was hugging to myself a plan. I would spend a few days of those left, before my boat was due to sail, in a visit to Boston.

My 'knowledge' of Canada had received continual rebuffs, but then it was a huge tract of country, whereas Boston was only one town, and I really did know a good deal about it. It was more familiar to English ears than New York itself. Called after the little seaport of Boston, Lincs., it had far outshone its godfather, and many a letter intended for England had gone over to Boston, Mass. The point that tickled me most was that Boston was 'not in America'. The ultra-exclusive inhabitants were neither English nor American, but just Bostonians—*sui generis*. I was eager to hear the special kind of accent they had developed. It was also a pleasure to know that the town could not be laid out in the chess-board style of Chicago. The streets were so narrow and in-and-out that a man had been known to catch his own coat-tails in hurrying round a corner. And yet the town must be modern and busy, for the legend ran that they killed a man a day in the traffic. Altogether a most alluring spot. If a bit medieval here and there, that was appropriate, because this Botolph's town had been named after a kindly East Anglian saint who protected travellers. Indeed, in old days a prayer and small donation to St. Botolph were an insurance for your journey. I didn't appeal to him but to the next best thing to a saint, a kindly fellow guest at the hotel in Montreal. He recommended the route through the White Mountain district, and perhaps he was inspired by St. Botolph, for it was a heavenly journey from first to last.

Neither knowing nor caring how long the journey would be, I put into my hold-all a few things that experience had taught

me might be handy as I went along, and checked my trunk to Boston. I wondered how my friend could ever have lost a package of any kind, since this system of checking was simplicity itself—you cared not how your luggage got on, nor what route it took—it was bound to find its fellow check in due course, and you had that in your pocket.

After an early start from Montreal there was a midday change at a place called Johnsburg (as well as I remember). Here was a chance for a refreshing wash, a sandwich, and a glass of milk. Apparently it was a border station, and when we started in the train that came up we were in the States. It is difficult to say why I was so pleased to be under the stars and stripes again; it seemed as vaguely attractive as being entirely by myself, I had to be neither submissive nor loyal. I now settled down for a good long run to Boston, put on slippers and travelling cap, and placed a book handy for reading, but found the scenery getting ever more interesting as the train wound among the hills. I was feeling at the acme of comfort, when by came the conductor to examine tickets. There were few passengers in the car, so he was in no hurry and seemed inclined for a chat.

‘What time this evening do we reach Boston?’ I asked.

‘This evening! We shan’t get there this evening at all.’

‘A night in the train?’ said I in dismay. ‘Why, that will mean missing all this beautiful scenery.’

‘Well, if that’s what you want, why not spend the night somewhere on the way, and go on to-morrow by daylight?’ Then pulling out his list of stations he added, ‘Look here, Fabyans is a fine spot, and a good hotel there and all. I could put you ashore there.’

‘Good hotel! But my trunk is checked on to Boston, and I’ve only this little hold-all. I can’t possibly put up like this at a decent hotel.’

‘Oh, don’t you mind about clothes. They’re all just holiday people there. You settle down again comfortably; I’ll tell you when to get ready to jump out—about four o’clock.’

For the next two hours we ran through distractingly lovely

country, all too fast, now through woods, now across wild moorland, now pushing a way through hedges so close that they brushed the windows; indeed at one time I thought we should be caught in the branches. And all around were hills. The sun was shining and fleecy clouds were throwing shadows in a way that reminded me of Wales.

Was there an hotel at Fabyans! There was nothing else. The railway station was its front door. I was the only passenger to get out. The train was off at once, and I had no choice but to go in. The word 'holiday-makers' had suggested a little wayside shanty, with the minimum of amenities, and people in camping outfit—and a couple of dollars the amount of the bill. To my surprise and distress I walked into a magnificent lounge, decorated expensively with ferns, flowers, flags, and festoons, as though for some gala occasion. A huge log fire was crackling in the grate, and rest-inviting chairs were scattered about. The many people talking and laughing about the place were of a type I had not seen before in America, obviously both wealthy and cultivated, all well dressed, but quite simply, and every one seemed care-free and jolly. How awkward I felt, standing in the entrance watching them—me with my ridiculous hold-all and travel-stained clothes. Seeing a little office at one side I went up to the reception clerk, told him plainly my predicament, and holding out a gold piece said that I expected he would like to be paid in advance as I had no luggage. He was shocked at such an idea, and had me conducted at once to a dainty little room with a fine view of the hills. The chambermaid informed me that hot baths were always to be had, and meals were served continually in the dining-room, to suit the various holiday outings of the guests, and then she asked whether I wanted anything else.

I didn't tell her so, but my wants were many. I turned out my hold-all to see what could be done. In addition to the slippers and cap and small toilet necessities, there was little beyond the inevitable *Hamlet*, my sketching-book and paint-box, and the book I had bought to read in the train and neglected (*A Window in Thrums*). But fortunately I found in

one of the pockets a needle-case, and was glad enough of it, for I had torn my sleeve in one of my excited movements across the railway car to see a view. After mending this I made a sketch of the hills to be seen from the window, and then was driven by hunger to overcome my shyness and look for a meal in the dining-room. A very friendly waitress served me immediately with a supper I shall never forget: salmon, chicken (with all sorts of small attendant dishes), griddle-cakes with clover honey, and real tea, such as I hadn't enjoyed since leaving home.

The beautiful evening tempted me out for a stroll along the hill-paths and through the pine-wood behind the hotel. Then I sat on the grass and tried to impress the scene on my memory—and succeeded. Everything combined to make it memorable, although each item by itself was familiar—mountains all round and a white mist in the valley, the dark pines, the rising moon, and one brilliant star—such things any one may see. But other items in the scene, equally familiar, gave a unique touch to it. The lovely green and red signal lights I had often admired outside King's Cross station; but here they twinkled like fire-flies. Little mountain trains I had known in Wales, but here great thundering expresses were hurtling through, with enormous funnels, horn-blowing and bell-ringing in the misty valley. One engine-driver's face looked weird in the glow of his fire, and reminded me of the steersman in the most haunting line of the *Ancient Mariner*. It grew dark and I reluctantly went indoors—to find another surprise. Half the floor of the big hall had been cleared for dancing and a string band was playing, interspersed with singing in which the dancers joined. Acutely conscious of my everyday dress, rendered worse by my poor mend of the sleeve and my walk in the wood, I found a secluded chair and hoped to escape notice. I would have gone up to my room had I not found the scene too amusing and the music too intoxicating. Very soon some one came up to me and begged for a dance. I couldn't resist and quickly forgot my dress in that merry and friendly crowd.

The next morning, as I was waiting in the lounge for my

train to come up, I noticed parties of young men and girls standing about in groups, all of them equipped for going up the mountains. 'You're not *going!*' they exclaimed. 'You mustn't miss the chance of such a perfect day as this for the mountains.' When I pleaded the shortness of my time before sailing for England, they said, 'But this is the Switzerland of America. Risk missing your boat. Cut Boston short. Come right along with us now.' If ever my mouth watered it did then, but my slender purse had already endured big inroads. . . . The many follies I've committed in life don't cause me half as much regret as the follies I never tasted.

My new train had an observation car at the rear, where the passengers were crowded; but they were most courteous in making room for the new-comer, and in pointing out and naming the places of interest. The views of the White Mountains, and especially of Crawford Notch, made me regret still more my not having made the ascent; but I was grateful enough to that conductor who had saved me from passing such delights in the night-train.

A fifteen minutes' stop at a wayside halt doesn't sound pleasant. There was no town near, nor anything. But I have never come across such a dream of a refreshment-room. The bar was loaded with freshly cut sandwiches (not deadly similar within), new buns, an enticing variety of cakes, huge pears, oranges, and jugs of creamy milk. I compared it with our English refreshment-rooms, usually so stale, dirty, and graceless. I understood Dickens's description of the American at Mugby Junction: 'I la'af. I dew. I la'af at yewer fixins, solid and liquid.' More than forty years have passed since I had that wayside meal, and yet an American would still laugh at our rock cakes and coffee essence and other miseries. Dickens's satire had no success in this direction.

I don't think there was any scheduled time for this pleasant stop, but when the conductor thought we had had enough to eat and finished our rambling round the engine and chat with the driver, he said, without raising his voice, 'All aboard,' and we all climbed in.

Glancing at the heading of a fellow passenger's book, I saw 'Sensation in General', guessed it was psychology, and expressed sympathy with her; we then exchanged ideas on teaching, and she told me of a plan being tried in her school for getting children to write quickly; they would copy some simple letter, say *o*, to the tune of 'Bonny Dundee' played on the piano, over and over again without lifting their pens from the page. I still think this a more useful exercise than the awkward script writing, which is often illegible and never rapid.

It was with real excitement that I jumped out at Boston, found my trunk, and took a hurdy to one of the hotels on Cook's list. A plan of the town was lent me, and I ventured on a short stroll in the hour before dinner. Now the unexpected thing about Boston was that (unlike Canada) it was just what I expected. Indeed, in that first stroll I nearly contributed my bit to the casualty statistics, for I was crossing a seemingly looking road, quite naturally endowed with rails, when I was aware of a huge truck towering over me and backing on to me. I skipped off just in time, but returned to the hotel a bit shaken. It was hardly reassuring to read on the notice-board in the entrance-hall that 1,600 cars passed the doors daily—intended as a recommendation. Boston was obviously a busy town. Labour-saving too. The number of bedrooms was enormous, and the service was managed by a curious scheme to avoid double journeys. I found hung up in my room a list of all that man could reasonably want, and opposite each, the number of pings on the bell that would bring it: 1 ping, the boot-boy; 2 pings, iced water; 3 pings, hot water; and so on up to 15 pings. What the 15 would bring I can't remember—that it was the fire-brigade was a later suggestion of Arthur's. Anyhow I was so alarmed lest I should ping too many or too few that I satisfied all my wants quite quietly by hunting about the hotel. The negro waiters and my fellow guests were very helpful when I needed assistance, especially in finding my way to the various places of interest in the neighbourhood.

My first objective was Boxford, a little village near Salem,



to see Professor Palmer, of Harvard, to whom I had an introduction. I had written to say I was coming, and set out early on my first morning by train for Boxford. The station-master greeted me and explained that Mr. Palmer was at work all the morning and couldn't come himself, but had given orders that I was to be driven to his house. Then helping me to a seat in a gig he jumped up and took the reins himself. 'But surely,' said I, 'you are not going to leave your station to look after itself?' 'Oh, yes, there won't be another train for a couple of hours.' Our way was along a deeply wooded lane that might have been dropped straight out of Devon, but the pine forest that came next was too dark and sinister-looking for anything I had seen at home. I almost expected to hear the howl of a wolf. It was 'New England' but seemed to me more like what one might imagine the 'Old England' of a thousand years ago.

The house was a dream of a place, an old cottage of historical interest (I forget exactly what, for every place around Boston had some bit of history connected with it). Mrs. Palmer was at the open door with arms extended to welcome me. In spite of August weather she had a wood fire 'just to add warmth to my greeting', she explained. On the fire was a kettle, and tea was at once made for me, 'for I know how English people love tea at any hour.' 'Well, this is my first *Boston Tea Party*,' said I, 'and I little thought when I learnt about it at school in what lovely surroundings I should drink tea in Boston.' At the midday dinner that soon followed Professor Palmer joined us and between the two of them I learnt a great deal more about education in America than I had gleaned from the Conference. They were not striving to impress me or be uplifting, but were refreshingly critical. Mr. Palmer was a friend of William James, the only human writer on psychology that I had come across. While we were chatting I suddenly remembered the boast of the Bostonians that they were not American. So perfectly English was their accent that I didn't notice it! Perhaps it would have escaped me altogether if I hadn't been brought sharp up against one slip on the part of Mrs. Palmer. Mr. Palmer was perfect, but I

found the Achilles heel in his wife. She said how vurry pleased she was about something. It gave me quite a little shock of pleasure to hear it. I felt like saying, 'Et tu, Brute?'

Cambridge and Harvard College were naturally the next places for me to visit, and I started off by tram very early in order to see as much as possible before the midday heat. The conductor of the tram was angry with me for jumping off before it stopped, and still more angry when I laughed. A little boy immediately stepped up to me and offered to tell me which building was which. He looked to me as if he had only recently been put into breeches, but he seemed to know his way around. A kindly little fellow, I thought, probably filling in a dull holiday-time. He didn't appear to belong to the well-to-do class (although one could never be sure), and I wondered whether he would be offended by a tip. So after a quarter of an hour's amble round I compromised by thanking him and giving him a quarter to 'buy sweets'. Offended he certainly was. Rejecting my coin with scorn he demanded two dollars as his proper fee! Walking away I left him to pick up his tip or leave it, as the fancy struck him.

I said that Boston fulfilled my expectations in every particular, but Cambridge and Harvard outran them. With visions of Chicago University in my mind I was afraid of imagining anything too glowing, and was therefore delightfully disappointed. Creeper-clad Old Massachusetts Hall took my fancy immensely, reminding me of many a college building in our own Cambridge; and the funny name fascinated me too. So I sat on the grass and tried to get an impression of it in my sketch-book, grumbling at my lack of colours for the brilliant green of the creeper, and still more at my lack of skill to do the trees. Absorbed in my job, I was shocked to hear an 'English' lady's voice behind me, 'Allow me to remove this bug from your neck.' It was only a harmless little fly, and we both laughed at my acquiring a new American usage.

Longfellow as a poet I had long outgrown, but always had happy associations with verses learnt in childhood, and felt it an act of piety to visit his house. They had made a museum

of his study, crowding it with such absurd mementoes as a chair 'made from the wood of the spreading chestnut-tree'. A far more appropriate relic of the poet was a portrait of Keats, the well-known one by Severn. I asked the attendant whether it had been hung there by Longfellow himself, and she supposed it had, for it had been in the same place as long as she could remember. This specially interested me, since Arthur possessed a similar copy of the portrait, given to him by Walter Severn, the son of the artist.

It was not Lowell's poetry but his *Biglow Papers* that led me to pay respects to his grave—a very simple one. The *Biglow Papers* were in verse, of course, but it was their humour that mother and I had enjoyed so much. How she used to roll over her tongue,

*But John P.*

*Robinson he*

*Said they didn't know everything down in Judee.*

A visit to Bunker's Hill and mounting to the top of the monument, and efforts to remember details of the war with America (treated vaguely in school days), consumed the afternoon, and I returned hot and thirsty to the hotel, alarming the negro waiter by the amount of tea I drank. The heat was so great that one could neither sit nor lie nor stand, like the prisoners in the Bastille.

Next morning I was up early again and took a seven-something train to Wellesley, walked up to the College through a beautiful lane and park, to be greeted and shown over the buildings by Mrs. Case. On my return I felt that I had heard enough about education for a long time, and might indulge in my own fancies for the rest of my stay in America. At one period I had idolized Emerson, and in spite of the gruelling heat I went off in the afternoon by railway to Concord. I walked to Sleepy Hollow (what a marvellous name to imagine) and there came across Rip himself. Glad of any excuse to speak to the aged fellow, I asked him to show me which was Emerson's grave. This was certainly a pleasing contrast to Longfellow's study, for the only memorial was a huge boulder. For

that little pilgrimage I hadn't peas in my shoes, but suffered nobly enough. Scarcely able to drag myself along the dusty road to the depot, yet hurrying in the hope of just catching a train, I found myself with nearly an hour to wait. The only bright spot in the desolate little booking-office was the notice: 'No smoking. Especially pipes.' I saw plenty of Massachusetts on the return journey, for it was the slowest train that I have ever experienced. When I sank into bed that night I determined to *do* no more sights, but to see Boston as any town ought to be seen, by walking about aimlessly, and let Boston make its own impression.

Accordingly next morning I ventured out without my map, feeling sure that I knew Boston now, and having the Londoner's dislike of being seen consulting a map in the street and being thought a tourist. Delighting in my freedom from both education and interesting sights, I pranced down street after street, muttering to myself a line from what I always considered the perfect holiday poem, especially for a teacher who endured 'supervision duty':

*Dorm on the herb, with none to supervise.*

What was my astonishment when my eyes fell on the house of their author. Thrice blessed are the 'sights' that we run against accidentally. I stared; it was true; on a little creeper-covered house of no apparent importance was a small brass plate with the magic name O. W. Holmes. No doubt the actual autocrat was inside, possibly sounding somebody's chest or making up a prescription. I went to and fro, and then close up to the bell, and had the greatest difficulty in resisting the impulse to ring and ask to see the doctor about some imaginary complaint. I had no possible symptom of anything, and dragged myself away. How often I have since wished that I had rung that bell, asked to see him, and simply told him of the pleasure his books had given me.

I did the next best thing, looked about for a bookshop, asked to see his works, and bought a copy of the one which a false friend had borrowed and not returned. The man in

the shop was the only unpleasant American I struck. Perhaps it was the heat, for he was obviously in a bad temper. As he wrapped up the book he remarked surlily, 'You English people! You all go down on your knees to a lord.' 'Do we?' said I as though seeking information, 'I never noticed that.' 'Oh yes,' he went on, 'you grovel to them.' I said I had missed the grovelling act, but he was so cross and earnest that I thought it better not to laugh or contradict, so bowing my head at last in solemn acquiescence I went off. After a leisurely lunch in a cool-looking café, I thought I would make my way gradually back to the hotel by a new route. It was certainly a new route and certainly gradual. I had wandered and turned about so much during the morning that I had lost all sense of direction, and had no idea where my hotel was. I found that its name, 'The United States Hotel', made no impression on the people I asked. They couldn't rightly just say where it was. Even when I mentioned to one man that 1,600 cars passed its doors daily he only smiled. I began to see that the chess-board arrangement of Chicago had some advantages, and even the dreadful numbering of the streets. I could see no post-office. I was too good a Londoner to speak to a policeman on traffic duty, but at last I spied one who was seemingly at leisure for the moment—a fine, tall fellow, in the cool garments and light helmet that our bobbies would envy. I approached him with, 'Can you tell me where the United States Hotel is, officer?' 'It's where it was yesterday!' he snapped, not to be trifled with. But when I looked bewildered he melted, and pointing with a smile across the road said, 'Over there.' Boston, thought I, is Looking-glass Land to the life—you can't reach a place, but walk away from it and you bump into it.

The next day was my last and a Sunday, and I meant to keep cool and not go far afield, to put pride in my pocket and take a map. I made for a church 'noted for its fine services', but found that they were taking far too long to ask the Lord to have mercy on them, considering the state of the weather. Then I tried another 'noted for architecture' and went in only to find the same petitions going on, but at a later stage. I had

given up the idea of attending any service at all when I noticed a building whose excessive architecture proclaimed it to be something non-conforming. 'Anything for a change,' thought I, and walked in to find a sermon impending. I should have hurriedly withdrawn, but a kindly man ushered me to a seat and I found myself in the midst of a large and hearty congregation. A big fellow in a black gown was on a kind of platform, and in front of him an open Bible cushioned on a desk. After a significant pause he began to prance to and fro, and announced from various positions on the platform: 'One thing thou lackest' (which I took to be his text). 'Here,' said he, 'we have a fine building, one of the very finest in our country' (elaboration of its merits followed). 'We have all the best appointments—comfortable pews, good ventilation, stained-glass windows' (more elaborations of each). 'Our splendid and costly organ, raised by our own efforts, is now free of debt' (this surprised me). 'I may say without boasting that our choir can beat any in Boston' (recent successes in competitions enumerated). 'We have an overflowing congregation. Owing to your generosity we have had the means to do all this.' Here followed another long pause, and I made sure that all this was to lead up to an appeal for dollars for a new vestry-room or some such excrescence. 'One thing thou lackest,' he said in a low, quiet tone, as he seemed to eye each one of us. Then suddenly, with a business-like jerk of the head, he finished with, 'All we want now is the Holy Ghost to run the show.'

At my last meal before leaving that evening a woman at my table ate as much like a pig as any one can. I counted ten little dishes arranged around her, and even so her vegetable was on the cloth. What a town of extremes, and I felt that in my short stay I had been lucky enough to see a good many of them.

*Here's to the city of Boston,  
The home of the bean and the cod,  
Where the Lowells speak only to Cabots,  
And the Cabots speak only to God.*

## VI

### *Meeting the Sun*

JUST before leaving Boston I had a letter from my late travelling companion warning me of all the dangers of New York. 'On no account take a cab. I had to pay six dollars for mine.' I pictured the scene with some amusement—the cabby's revenge for the many trunks and a haughty manner. I forget the other pitfalls of the city, but thought it would be wise to check my one trunk straight through to the hotel, and so be independent of cabs. My route lay by train to Fall River and thence by boat to New York. It was dark when I went aboard; I was dirty and tired with the train journey, and had to wait ages in a queue to see the purser, to get a state-room. When at last my turn came the only thing left was to share a cabin with five others. One sight of these quarters was enough to keep me from bed as long as possible, and I amused myself by prolonging my dinner and watching my fellow passengers. The S.S. *Plymouth* was said to be the finest of its kind afloat, and it seemed to be used for pleasure trips, for although it looked already full enough, lots more people came aboard at a port where we called; and there followed the gayest scenes of music and dancing in the saloon. Driven by fatigue to my berth I had a miserable night, and when we docked in the morning I felt too weak and faint to get about. Turning resolutely from the inviting cabs, I induced a car to stop for me, and reached the haven of the Broadway Central Hotel. After a bath and breakfast and a couple of hours' sleep I felt equal to anything.

There was no time to waste, for in two days my boat sailed. A little business had to be done first, including a visit to the post-office for letters, and another to Cook's to get my money changed. How pleasing were the English sovereigns and pennies. I kept only enough American money for immediate needs, except one gold piece which I put away carefully (and

still possess) as a memento of so jolly a visit. Even these short walks exhausted me, for New York exhibited a kind of heat completely new to me. Boston had been hot, but here there was a dry, choking heat, as though one were being smothered in blankets. I even longed for the Atlantic, and I can't put it more strongly than that. I discarded as many clothes as I could, and understood Sidney Smith's desire to take off his skin and sit in his bones. In addition to the heat the noise of the street was terrific, although the traffic in Broadway was anything but enormous as compared with Oxford Street or Holborn. The paving consisted of those big stones (about the size of an ordinary brick) that used to make travel in the buses of old days so sickening, and that have now been discarded in London. Some one in the hotel explained to me that the extremes of heat and frost in New York defied any attempt at better paving. But I expect that by now something has been done to counteract the noise.

No more walking that day for me, and I spent the afternoon in a twenty-five cent drive round Central Park, feeling sorry for the Americans that they had not such grand old trees as we have in Kensington Gardens. One road I was particularly anxious to see—Fifth Avenue. This I had always understood to be the home of millionaires and the intellectual and social *élite* of New York. I expected a super-magnificent Park Lane. I went along it, and said to myself, is this really it? No doubt there is more than meets the eye.

And now only one more day in America, and all New York to choose from. I was quite certain what my choice would be. I meant to go to see the Stock Exchange, weather or no. My father had told me little bits about the London Stock Exchange, and I knew that no outsider could enter its holy precincts. To this day I am fond of going down Throgmorton regions and watching all the busy to-ing and fro-ing in the street, picturing my father among them. Well, I understood that the New York exchange was not so exclusive, and that any one might go up into the gallery at Wall Street and look down on the brokers broking. I had heard that they did a good deal of



shouting, but the scene exceeded my wildest fancies. The yelling and the gestures were a blend of the lion-house, the monkey-house, and the parrot-house in the Zoo. There was only one other spectator in the gallery, and presently I remarked to him that the citizens of New York were missing a splendid entertainment. He looked at me in a puzzled way, and then said, 'It's new to you. You are a stranger, you're English, aren't you?' I admitted it, and he added, 'Well, we don't think anything of this; they're just doing ordinary business; it's a dull day—a darned slack day. You must come again when there's something really going on.' 'Unfortunately I'm sailing to-night,' I replied, 'so there will be no other chance.' 'Then I hope you have had a good time and seen plenty.' I laughed as I told him that I had only two days for New York, and so far had seen only Central Park, Fifth Avenue, and the Stock Exchange. 'Come with me now,' said he, 'and I will show you as much as possible in ten minutes.' He then took me to the top of the Equitable building, whence there was a view of the whole city. 'You can tell them way back,' said he, 'that you saw *all* of New York.' Unfortunately all I can remember now is the statue of Liberty, which I had already seen sufficiently, but my friend gave me statistics of the number of people who could dine in her head, or something equally absurd. It made my arm ache to look at that statue, and I realized why a piece of sculpture should never give one a restless sensation.

For my last afternoon I went for a stroll, but was careful not to stray too far from my base, lest I should get lost again. Even so, I soon became exhausted with the heat, and thought I would go back on the elevated railroad. Spying a little book-ing-office I asked for a ticket to the nearest station to my hotel. 'Five cents,' said the clerk, as he slapped down the ticket. Searching my purse I found that I had come out without any small change.

'Sorry,' said I, handing back the ticket, 'I'm afraid I must walk back. I've no money on me except an English sovereign.'

'Oh, do let me look at it!' cried the clerk, and when I handed

it to him he gazed on it as in a trance, and then said, 'I'm English, too.'

'What part of England do you come from?' I asked.

'A place called Manchester,' said he. 'Do you know it?'

'Do I know it!' I laughed. 'Why, every one knows Manchester. I'm only a Londoner, and the saying is that what Manchester thinks to-day London thinks to-morrow.'

He thereupon thrust my sovereign and the ticket back to me, and said it didn't matter about the five cents. We managed to shake hands through the little booking-hole.

I was quite glad to get back into the shelter of the hotel, for the weather had developed a terrifically high wind, a sort of sirocco. I amused myself by making a pen-and-ink drawing of Broadway from the veranda, then packed my hold-all and watched the scenes in the street until dusk, when it was time to start for the boat. My trunk had been sent on, so that I had nothing to do but make my way to the docks by car. Again I had that queer feeling of the unreality of the whole thing—stepping out of an hotel and boarding an Atlantic liner so casually.

The S.S. *New York* was a palatial affair compared to the *Adriatic*. I had a roomy cabin all to myself (an advantage impossible to overrate), and as soon as I had disposed of my things I wandered about to explore the vessel. Presently it occurred to me that it was rather cold-blooded to leave a country where I had been treated so hospitably without saying good-bye to some one. Seeing a young officer, I said, 'Which way is it to the sea, please?' When he laughed I explained that it was not exactly the sea that I wanted, but to find the place where I could get ashore. Then I ran across the gangway on to America again. It was now quite dark, but not far away I saw the glare of some stalls. I bought two large pears, and astonished the man by telling him that I was all alone, was just off to England, and wanted to say good-bye to him. When I added that I felt hungry but couldn't bear to face the ship's dinner, I think he put me down as mentally deficient.

I had been in my berth some time before the tremble of

the engines told me that we were off. Determined not to let my nausea keep me in my cabin, as it had done on the outward voyage, I struggled into my clothes each morning and crawled up on deck, so glad to have got past the smell of india-rubber. I made no attempt so much as to look into the dining-saloon. But I had hardly been tucked up in a rug on a deck-chair by kindly fellow passengers before a steward would come along with beef-tea, followed by another with sandwiches. The weather was splendid, and all the other passengers were bursting with health. They were amused at my lying there all day, and used to stop for a chat as they went by, and tease me. 'One would think you were a mamma instead of a girl!' 'If I had to scrub the deck,' I argued, 'I would probably be well enough to do it; but as I have nothing to do, why shouldn't I do as I like?' Concerts and things were going on in the distance, but they couldn't induce me to attend them; so they brought me several books to beguile the time. Of these I tried three: one described a broken-hearted lover, another a forsaken girl, and the third a mother's death-bed. After these I preferred merely revelling in the idea that I was getting nearer England. Lunch-time made a pleasant interlude. A little while before it was due the steward came to me with the menu for me to make a choice, and then the various things were brought to me on a vast tray, served in a most appetizing way. At some time each day the purser sat down for a chat. He was a charming fellow, full of droll anecdotes, and I began to suspect that pursers were chosen simply for their ability to make the voyage agreeable for the passengers.

What with these many chats, the continual little meals, watching men cleaning the already spotless things on the ship, and the excitement of sometimes seeing a steamer in the distance, the days never hung heavily. I compared them with those endless days on the *Adriatic*, and commented on the difference to the purser. 'But they really *are* shorter,' he exclaimed, 'because we are meeting the sun,' and proceeded to explain it at great length. I agreed to all he said very heartily, for I felt I would rather go west again than be made to

understand what happened. 'The upshot of it seems to be,' said I, 'that you lengthen your life by travelling west, and if you kept at it thoroughly there is no reason why you should ever die.' He said there was something in my point, but it obviously set him back a pace, and the subject was fortunately dropped.

On the last evening a specially good dinner was laid out on my tray, with real grapes, so different from those I had eaten in America, which looked and tasted as if they had come off a woman's hat. When I remarked on this to the steward he said, 'Captain's dinner—special.' Whether it was the captain's dinner or a rumour flying round that the Scilly Lights were in view, I can't say, but suddenly my legs returned, my head was no longer giddy, and I ran along the deck waving my arm and crying, 'Hurrah for Cornwall'. To think that Tony and Reskadinnick were just over there! I could hardly sleep that night for excitement, found none of the former difficulty in dressing in the morning, and was early up on deck. I caused a small sensation by going into the dining-saloon for breakfast and eating heartily. 'Whom have we here? A stowaway?' was among the bantering remarks.

Then followed a cheery bustle of good-byes and hopes to meet again, of handing out of letters and sending off telegrams. For me there was a long letter from Arthur, begging me to give Cornwall the go-by and come straight on to Wales. Instructions were given about distinguishing the various stations at Southampton, about every possible train I might catch, where to change, and how he would expect a telegram as soon as ever I could give particulars. He would come to Southampton to meet me were it not for the old *res angusta*. In case the letter should go astray the more intimate parts were in Welsh and Latin.

I parted regretfully from my friend the deck-steward. Not knowing what was the correct tip, since no one had been waited on as I had been, I confided to him my difficulty, and offered him all the American notes that remained to me. He demurred to this and asked did I know how much it was. I

said no, I wasn't at all clear, but it didn't matter, as I was never likely to go to America again.

I had jumped with glee from the gangway and was looking around in sheer delight at being on English ground again, when an elderly man and a younger one approached me, asked me where I was intending to go and what my luggage was, and offered to arrange everything for me, trains and all. While I was explaining Arthur's directions to the older man the younger one had gone off and soon drove up in an open fly with my trunk aboard. He then took me to the right station for Wales, sent my telegram for me, and saw me off. He refused all payment for fly and telegram, and said it was a pleasure. I like to think that these kindly people were not members of some Society for the Protection of Young Females, but were just being helpful to any one bewildered on arrival at a big port.

My train was a rickety old thing, finishing an honourable life no doubt on an unfrequented line. It was one of those soft September mornings when the sleepy country-side looks its best—green fields with overgrown hedges, where the children gathering blackberries stopped to wave at the train . . . old red farms and grey churches. It all reminded me of my mother's saying that England always seemed to her like a garden when she returned from abroad. As we drew near to Winchester I hung out of the window to catch a glimpse of the ancient royal city and the cathedral. In the station the guard strolled up for a word and told me that I was the only passenger. When I said that I had been over to Chicago he was greatly interested, for his wife had a nephew out in those parts, and he felt sure that I must have come across him.

I passed through bits of England that day that I shall probably never see again, for it was an oddly cross-country journey. My first change was at Oxford, where I saw a woman struggling with a child and a lot of luggage. As I helped her along I asked her where she was going. 'Quebec,' said she, 'a terrible long way.' 'It will soon be over,' said I, 'and when you get there it is such a lovely place, something like England,

you know. I've just come from there, and I was so sorry to leave it.' This cheered her, and I was able to pack her comfortably in her train before mine came in.

The usual confusion at Shrewsbury seemed quite homely, and the hills of Wales homelier still, and as we slowed down for Machynlleth I saw Arthur at the extreme edge of the platform.

## VII

### *Peter, Martin, and Jack Work Together*

#### § 1

WHEN work began again in the autumn I felt much richer for my time in America. Not from the speeches at the Chicago Conference, which had made only the slightest impression, but from the mixing with all sorts of people, and seeing how English ways looked from a distance. High-sounding educational theories made a stir and faded out. Ingenious methods took on the same ridiculous aspect as cure-all patent medicines. The only things of permanent importance to a teacher seemed to be to get hold of her pupils' point of view, and work somehow from that. This I knew meant nimbleness of mind rather than long experience; in fact I had observed that long experience, of itself, was often a drawback; your experienced teacher, especially if 'successful', was sure to meet any fresh idea with 'Well, I always make them . . .'

What, then, could I do to help these students of mine to a quicker means of getting *en rapport* with their classes? The natural way was to attend their lessons and discuss these afterwards. But the practice we managed to get in the schools was so deplorably little. And sometimes I hardly wondered at this, for despite all our care we had some humiliating experiences. Although the students were all women with diplomas and were assumed to be well educated, reliance could not be placed on their general knowledge. I impressed on them continually that they must not be afraid of questions, that every question from a pupil was a feather in one's cap, and that the ideal lesson would consist entirely of answers to such questions. In accordance with this idea I tried to foresee any likely questions and make sure that the student could answer them. One of our number, a London B.A., was so limited in

her range that I used to go over her notes with great care, however simple the subject, lest she should be landed in some awkward hole. In a lesson on the camel, for instance, she had a note to the effect that it could go without food for a considerable time by obtaining sustenance from its hump. This sounded bookish. 'Now suppose,' said I, 'that the class should ask you how the camel does this. What will you say?' As she looked nonplussed, I added, 'Do you think it stretches its head round and takes a bite for lunch?' 'Yes, I suppose it does.' Again, in a lesson on Australia she referred to the penal settlement. 'Now,' said I, 'if a child should ask you where our convicts are sent nowadays, I hope you know?' 'They are sent to Siberia, aren't they?' she replied. The word *portcullis* occurred in some poem she was to teach, and I asked her to draw it, or at least to describe it. No reply. 'Well, do you think it is a kind of Russian soldier?' She thought it probably was. However, ignorance never mattered much so long as they didn't haver and muddle and pretend to know what they didn't. Even specialists can be gravelled in their own subject, but it's quite easy to find things out. In fact, elder pupils can be given books of reference and dig for themselves.

Whatever preliminary pains I took, blush-making mistakes would be made either from ignorance or nervousness, and I used to amuse Arthur with them at the week-end. He said it must be as bad for me to sit and endure blunders and good chances thrown away, as it is for a Junior to watch his Leader ruining his case. 'I am more exhausted by the agony of hearing him spoil point after point than by any amount of work of my own, even bad work of my own.'

My worst experience in this line happened at the school for daughters of the clergy, where I had obtained by means of great meekness and cajolery permission to give a course of lessons. I had at the time a student rather older than the rest, a woman of intelligence and wide culture, who had travelled in Italy and enjoyed the pictures that I had always longed to see. When I suggested that she should give one or two lessons on Italian artists to these daughters of the clergy,



she grew quite enthusiastic and prepared notes on Botticelli full of interesting matter and illustrated by good reproductions. The girls, an elder class, were assembled, and I looked forward to a pleasant half-hour, as the student took up her position at the desk and disposed all her illustrations conveniently to hand. But not a word did she utter. Minutes passed. Still not a syllable . . . nor sign . . . nor groan. She didn't look ill. I almost wished she did. The girls began to look at one another and fidget. It seemed much longer, but I suppose it was only ten minutes that we sat expecting her to begin every moment. Then it dawned on me that she had been literally struck dumb with nervousness. I had seen it take very odd shapes, but never such abject paralysis as this. Making some excuse I led her out, and returned to give some kind of a lesson on Botticelli. The girls guessed what was the matter, I think, for they behaved splendidly, as young people always will if things go wrong.

But news of the incident reached the headmistress, who came to me when I was putting on my hat to request that we would not come again. When I pleaded nervousness she replied, 'But you mustn't *allow* them to be nervous.' I am sure she meant this kindly, and she added, what was of course true, that she couldn't afford to have the girls' time wasted like that. So bang went the bit of practice that had been so hard won.

It was no use to blame the poor student, whose contrition, like her feeling for Botticelli, was past words. But we all tried to analyse the malady, and came to the conclusion that the chief ingredients of nervousness were conceit and want of breath. If you don't mind making a fool of yourself (which you are sure to do anyhow) and take a deep breath, you will be able to face anything. It had been the fear of saying something inadequate about Botticelli, conceit in short, that had led to the present distress. The old slogan, 'It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt', may be excellent in society, but is no good in front of a class of girls. I cheered them with the reflection that all eminent speakers are nervous on beginning their speeches, however experienced they may be, for Arthur had told me that this was

the case with even the best men at the Bar. He said that even an after-dinner speech was not worth anything unless the speaker felt nervous when he started. Realizing that the sky hadn't fallen, the student recovered her poise and was never 'dumb before a Botticelli' again.

Another student was at the opposite pole, giving no trouble to herself or the school, free from nervousness, completely self-confident and humdrum. Of her I despaired, feeling sure that in mature age she would be precisely the same and would retire deeply respected.

Self-confidence, however, could appear in a different and highly interesting form. One student was a specialist in history, had been excited by Mr. Allen's scientific view of it, and was brimful of the notion that a class *must* catch her own spirit of enthusiasm for the subject. Now it chanced that her lot fell to take a class of elder girls in the Marylebone Higher Grade School. Such a tough set they were that the students used to call them 'the lions' den', and suffered tortures of nervousness before facing them. Well, she was for capturing their minds by taking broad sweeps of history, showing them the process of human development through the ages, giving them a graphic idea of the Flow of Time. Standing at a table in front of the 'lions' she opened ostentatiously a very large volume of history, and tossing its pages carelessly to and fro she began brightly: 'To-day we are going to take some event in history, and see what led up to it, and then what flowed from it. Now, girls, tell me any *one* historical fact, in *any* age.' A long pause followed, as may be well imagined, and I sat expectant, incapable myself of thinking of any event at all. At last one of the lions put up a paw. 'Please, Miss, Henry VIII had six wives.' The giggle round the class that followed put the poor student completely off her stroke, and the lesson went to pieces. But she herself had sufficient humour to learn a lesson from her failure. In fact we all profited by it, for I took the occasion to point out (much to the general comfort) the danger of being 'brilliant', of just enjoying oneself and regarding the pupils as an audience. 'Ask yourself,' I said, 'after an

apparently successful lesson, whether you have been teaching, or merely performing in front of the class.'

A quite peculiar problem was provided by another student. For some reason or other she had come on to me for a last term after having attended another training college for two terms. All my efforts had to be expended on untraining her. She had learnt to do all the correct things with a precise and devastating thoroughness. Such pains did she take to avoid mistakes in method that her lessons were drained of all spontaneity and were as dull and predictable as an old-fashioned sermon. Every lesson was furnished with a proper introduction, and ended with a summary; the life of a man always began with the Influence of his Times on Him and ended with His Influence on his Times. And yet in ordinary life this girl was sensible and natural. I then saw why so many people objected to training, without being able to say exactly what was the matter with it. I felt that if I could only smash something inside her she would come out well. I put the case before Arthur.

'You say that she does nothing wrong, and yet nothing worth doing?' said he. 'Has she any sense of humour?'

'Oh, plenty, when she isn't teaching; and she has brains.'

'Then why not take the bull by the horns and tell her the story of the man buying a horse at the fair?'

The story ran thus: A man saw a horse that greatly took his fancy—good appearance and every point correct. But the price was absurdly low. He asked what was the matter with it. Did it jib? No. Did it kick? No. Some ugly trick, surely? No, nothing wrong at all. So he bought it, and as soon as the money had been passed over he said, 'Now tell me, what is the matter with it?' The former owner replied, 'There's nothing the matter with it, but the horse isn't worth a damn.'

Following counsel's advice I took the bull by the horns, told the story, and got in response a hearty laugh from the student. She was then ready to see that a teacher, too, might be faultless and worthless. 'Cast all methods to the winds,' I suggested, 'and be your natural self. Keep your eye on the class more than on your prepared ideas, be ready for any

emergency or change of mood, and like a good horse be able to go the pace.'

It was for this general loosening-up of the minds of the students that we needed more practice so badly. And we suffered not only in the small quantity of teaching allowed us but also in its quality. We were asked to give lessons on subjects that the children already knew well (in which we could do little harm) or else on subjects that were dull, difficult, or unpleasant to take; for instance, a lesson on the plagues of Egypt, and another on Gehazi and Ananias (presumably to teach the dangers of untruthfulness). An example of the too familiar was a lesson on the well-worn Clive, and I was really sorry for the student who had to take it, for she was the one who had endured the anecdote of the horse. But she smiled on me cheerfully as she began. Finding, as we suspected, that the class knew all about Clive's naughtiness as a boy, and also all about the Black Hole, even to the exact number who crawled out alive in the morning, she said, 'Ah yes, I was sure you would know that. But have you ever thought what became of those twenty-three? Their health was undermined perhaps, and they died soon after? Very likely most of them did. But the other day, as I was walking through old St. Pancras churchyard, what should I see but a tombstone to the memory of one of those twenty-three survivors. He had lived to a great age, and I wondered how often he had told the story of that night.' This little atom of reality brought the class to life. Then she suggested that they might act a scene about it: one could be the old man telling the story, the others acting as his grandchildren asking him questions as to who ordered the black hole, and why, who punished him, and how, and any other questions they liked. 'If grandpapa doesn't know something he is asked, it is because his memory is failing with age, and one of the others can say she knows it from hearing him tell it so often before.' The scene went with a swing, and the time was up all too soon. As we left the school I said to her in mock concern, 'You have entirely neglected Clive's Influence on his Times.' 'Yes, thank goodness,' was her happy reply.

In such wrestling with trouble, and building bethels out of stony griefs, the students made the best of bad jobs. Then it occurred to me that I might supplement the meagre school practice by some exercises in College. So I set apart Saturday morning for doing all sorts of things that would help them to get rid of nervousness, to become ready-witted for emergencies, to feel confidence in being able to manage some devices rapidly and well. Sometimes I gave out a subject to be prepared, sometimes the exercise had to be done impromptu. Each student in turn had to tell an anecdote, describe some place, sketch a character from history, or explain something from her special subject (or even stand questioning on it). Sometimes there was a competition in writing on the black-board, for rapidity and legibility at a distance; or working out a long sum, or arranging heads effectively. Reading aloud, getting variety into the voice, arranging for the others to act a scene, dictating a passage—I thought up all the tortures I could, and at first they were unpopular. But I took care that all criticism should be light-hearted, I thanked those who made fools of themselves for the public good, and in this spirit Saturday mornings became a pleasure for us all.

An exercise in drawing was always part of the programme, and here there was a great deal of recalcitrance to be fought. From America I had learnt the phrase 'talking with the chalk', and I urged the students to throw a little plan or sketch or map on the board to illustrate anything they were explaining or describing. 'It may not be really needed to make the point clear, but it focuses attention if nothing else.' 'Oh, I never could draw,' was of course a common reason for never trying, until I hit on the slogan, 'The worse you draw the better.' I pointed out, what they already knew, that elaborate drawings on the board, so often seen in schools, were a waste of time and ministered only to the vanity of the teacher. 'Draw worse than you really can,' said I, 'and if a pupil looks supercilious invite her to come out and make a better sketch for you. She very likely can, you thank her, and every one is pleased. Poor drawing in the teacher encourages all to have a try, while

does them harm; they become more dazed, more stupid, less interested in anything at all, and finally manage to marry men who commit suicide.

Each student agreed to select one pupil suspected of such tendency from the schools we attended, and watch her from the back; have a look at her note-book if possible; ask her sometimes at the end of a lesson what she had learnt from it. The reports brought to College were illuminating enough, often depressingly so. Special efforts were made to interest these girls in something—anything. One of those under observation sat mentally asleep week after week in an elder class of a private school, and a rivalry arose as to who should get a gleam of intelligence from her. At last, in a geography lesson, some mention was made of cannibals, with explanation of a very slight kind. ‘Do they really eat one another?’ exclaimed this girl. When she was assured that it was a fact, she sat up, took notice, and never relapsed into her lethargy.

Another plan I devised for making the most of our small practice was this: each student had a ‘shadow’, a fellow student (chosen by herself) who went to as many of her lessons as possible during the term, watched teacher and class as a whole, gave her all the help she could, told her of little tricks and mannerisms, and discussed the effect of the lessons on the pupils as it appeared to an onlooker. But none of my devices made up for the lack of plenty of practice. Help was at hand, however, from a most unexpected quarter.

## § 2

One morning the College porter came up to say that two gentlemen were downstairs desirous to see me. To my surprise these were two Roman Catholic priests. After apologies for troubling me for the interview, with excessive courtesy and delicately worded questions, mixed with vague statements, they drew from me (what I was in no way anxious to conceal) the fact that Bedford College was entirely undenominational. Yes, indeed, they had heard a rumour to that effect;

strange as it seemed, no statement of creed or faith was required of its students; not even attendance at prayers was required; nor even the formality of special exemption from prayers.

'Quite,' I answered readily, 'for the simple reason that there are no prayers to be excused from. No one prays here at all, let alone requires any one else to do so.'

At this they smiled a little, and so did I, and then they approached their main point. Their teaching sisters were well educated and devoted to their work, but felt the need of understanding its principles and knowing about modern methods. It was hoped soon to start a training college for them in London; indeed they had a prospective head for it. But she herself was vague as to what the work embraced, and would like to go through a course of training—would like, in short, to attend for a year at Bedford College.

'Just to get hold of our ideas, and then carry them out herself afterwards?' said I. They laughed a little uncomfortably at that, but I immediately added that I thought it a capital idea, and should be delighted to help on the good work as much as possible. We parted with great cordiality, and two nuns were entered, and followed by several more from other convents a little later.

It was those first two nuns that made the greatest impression on me, partly because it was the first time I had made the acquaintance of a nun, but still more because they were both remarkable women and have remained my friends for life. The one who was to become herself the Principal of the Convent Training College somewhat alarmed me on her arrival, for she was ten years older than I was, and had far more experience of teaching. 'Mother St. Raphael' in her convent, she was entered at College as Miss Paley. As I was taking her name down I said, 'Are you any . . .?'

'Yes,' she interrupted, 'I'm his granddaughter.' I need not have feared her wealth of experience, for she was quite humble-minded about it, and ever willing to describe the mistakes she had made in her early teaching, for the benefit and encouragement of the others, as well as to provide apt and often humorous

illustrations for any principle I put forward. Her much younger 'sister', Angela Bethell (with the equally beautiful religious name of 'Mary of Assisi'), was one of the most charming girls I have ever met, as well as being one of the finest teachers I ever trained. Many years later she succeeded to Miss Paley's work at the Convent Training College, which has now become a widespread and flourishing institution, sending out every year large numbers of trained graduates—whom I like to think of as my grandchildren.

It was not so much the addition to our numbers that I rejoiced in as the addition to our facilities for practice. The Roman Catholic authorities felt grateful to us, I think, for our hearty welcome to the nuns, for they were generous in allowing us to practise in all their schools within reach. This was a great boon, for the classes were large and the pupils behaved well; in this way the students could get experience in class management without being unduly worried by disciplinary troubles at the same time. I had come to the conclusion that too many difficulties at once may easily discourage a beginner, who needs to be broken in gradually. A lions' den is not a favourable milieu for trying out new ideas, and, after all, rough behaviour with a visiting teacher is the fault of the ordinary teacher, rather than the visitor's.

All this increase in our students and in facilities for practising led Miss Penrose, the new Principal of Bedford College, to feel that she ought to pay a call of courtesy at the convent in Cavendish Square. This she did, but told me afterwards that she had been afraid to go alone and had induced some one to face the ordeal with her. I couldn't help amusing Miss Paley with this terrible adventure, but she pretended great disappointment. 'Oh, what fun we missed!' said she. 'If we had only known we could have locked her in the torture-chamber.' She then told me that a visitor once expressed surprise that they had windows in the convent. 'Oh, yes,' she had replied, 'and if we had time we should look out of them.'

Being ignorant of the daily routine of the convent, I said, when Ash Wednesday was looming, 'Would you like the day



off, or to come late, for special services or something?' 'Oh thank you, no,' laughed Miss Paley, 'we get through all that kind of thing *long* before College hours. We are up at five every day, you know.' In fact I was astonished how light-heartedly they took everything, even their religious duties. However, a nun from another convent who shortly arrived was of a different kidney. She had been the headmistress of a large school for several years, and was (perhaps in consequence) extremely lugubrious; and her dress of unrelieved black emphasized her woe. But we soon made her as frivolous as ourselves, for she discovered that in order to be impressive there was really no *need* to be dismal.

Among the lectures that I had to administer I came to feel that those on nebulous psychology were not so valuable as those on famous teachers of the past. A knowledge of how Comenius had started a direct method, how Milton had insisted on practical activity in school, how Pestalozzi had managed to teach single-handed in a barn some fifty young people of all ages, and so on—such knowledge would bring a balanced judgement when the students were later on to be confronted with some world-shaking 'new method'. Now when my syllabus warned me that a lecture on the Jesuits was due, I felt some misgiving. Much as I admired their genius for teaching, I feared that I might say something that was inaccurate or needlessly derogatory to them, while Miss Paley would be sitting there always polite and taking notes, but possibly thinking. So I took her aside a fortnight beforehand, told her plainly my trouble, and suggested that she herself should give the lecture, 'as practice for the future', I urged. To my relief she leapt at the idea, and said she could get the very best material for it from a Jesuit Father to whom she could apply. It was a great success all round, for the other students felt that they were getting the information straight from the horse's mouth, took copious notes, and asked questions which Miss Paley answered ably. In the discussion that followed I raised some points about Jesuit educational methods of which I doubted the wisdom, and all of us, nuns included, were quite

outspoken both in approval and disapproval. I had a notion that the nuns enjoyed their perhaps unwonted freedom of speech.

It would be hard to find pleasanter people to deal with than these nuns. My sole objection to them was their habit of wiping their pens on some portion of their voluminous garments. I approached Miss Paley in the matter, but she laughingly replied that its potentiality as a pen-wiper was the main advantage of the get-up.

Looking back on that interview with the priests, I hardly wondered that they had scruples in sending their nuns to us. In those days of definitely denominational institutions, Bedford College was looked upon as godless, indeed almost Unitarian! Perhaps they feared that we might heartlessly persecute any one definitely religious. But as individuals we were all godly enough, and one I remember was fiercely so—a Plymouth brother. I should never have discovered her particular shade of belief but for her propensity to preach devastating doctrines in such simple things as a geography lesson. 'This must stop,' I said, 'you may believe that if a good person and a bad person are thrown together the good person is bound to become bad, but I won't have you spreading this gospel among the children.'

As for Roman Catholicism, we others all treated the nuns' faith with courtesy, and they played the game, too, and made no attempts to convert us. The nearest Miss Paley ever came to it was to say one day, 'We shall make a good Catholic of you yet, Miss Thomas.' And when the public examination was impending, and one of the students was dreading failure, a nun pressed an inch-long figure of a saint into her hand and said, 'Take this into the room with you to help you.'

With our numbers going up and examination results good, my salary was raised, I was given an assistant, and Professor Muirhead was appointed to give some very learned lectures on psychology. Sometimes I took a few of the students to an outside lecture, and one of these interested me specially, partly because I knew the lecturer, Graham Wallas, personally,

and partly on account of his detached and humorous attitude to education—treated as a rule so absurdly solemnly by lecturers. ‘I don’t know why I am talking to you about teaching,’ said he, ‘for I know practically nothing about it. But experience in one walk of life often sheds light on another. Now the subject that I know a lot about is statistics. No connexion with education, you will say at once. But, believe me, statistics can give a wide view of life, and impart great peace of mind, and peace of mind goes a long way in any occupation. For instance, in teaching. Now I hear on quite reliable authority that children in school sometimes misbehave. Let us take the population of England to be forty millions. Tables of statistics will show you exactly what percentage of these millions are attending schools. Well, then, of those attending schools a certain percentage, at any given moment, are bound to be behaving badly. When, therefore, *your* class is behaving badly, say to yourself: “Am I to be exempt from the mathematical law of averages? Am I so marvellous that no child ever misbehaves with me? Am I never to bear my share of the nuisance? What priggishness! What selfishness!” And in the long run, believe me, what a lot of life you would miss.’

## VIII

### *Pisgab*

#### § 1

EVERY one has some special place in the world that he wants to see. To-day any one with a holiday and a little money can go almost anywhere, and consequently dashing about has lost much of its zest. But in the nineties it was thought a great thing to go abroad, and any 'travelling' for myself I had placed in some rosy future. Two places had floated in my fancy—America and Italy. I wanted to see the former for its newness and go-ahead ideas, and the latter for its odour of antiquity and its art treasures. As for the equally attractive Greece and Egypt, where parties of people pop about now, they were as remote in my dreams as Tibet. It was annoying to meet people who had the chance to see such places and no power to enjoy them. Just picture my pain in receiving this on a post-card: 'We have been to see the ruins of Carthage; this was a town founded by the Romans in 850 B.C.' My brother Tom had a pupil who was taken to Rome, and on his return asked whether the town he had visited was the *same* as Julius Caesar lived in; he had suspected a kind of fake to attract tourists. He was not a bright boy, for in some public examination he had to 'say what he knew about' various items, among them Flodden. In going over the paper with him afterwards Tom said, 'I suppose you could do Flodden?' 'Oh *yes*, Sir, we spent last summer holidays there!' 'Yes,' said Tom, 'but what happened there?' 'Oh, we just mouched about.'

Well, America had fallen miraculously into my lap, and a year or two later, in a rather absurd way, I was to set foot in Italy. The member of Bedford College Council who had contrived to get me appointed to the training work, and had continued to take interest in all we did, had become very friendly with me in a detached way, and had probably been instrumental

in my being selected to go to America. But great was my astonishment at the beginning of a long vacation when she suggested that I should go with her and her sister to Switzerland. I declined, knowing them to be rich people who would travel in a style beyond my means. Since they knew the exact amount of my salary they easily guessed the cause of my refusal, and I was hastily assured that they always went about in the cheapest way they could, and that twelve to fifteen pounds would cover all fares and hotel expenses. I said I would think it over. This meant consulting Arthur (whose existence I kept dark). He had recently been on a trip to Germany with his doctor brother, and got so much interest, chiefly of a political kind, from it that he urged me to take the chance to see something of another country. The chief lack he had felt was some knowledge of German, for ignorance of the language prevented him from hobnobbing with the ordinary people he met—the only real way to get to know a country. Here I felt a bit superior, for hadn't I learnt French from my tenderest years, and French would be all right in Switzerland. So I wrote a note agreeing to go, and was then asked to come for a consultation as to what luggage to take.

The two sisters were the last members of a family to occupy an enormous house at a corner of one of the more dignified of the Bloomsbury squares. I had been invited to dine with them now and again, and had been somewhat overawed by the ritual of the meal. Although they were rigid abstainers, different kinds of wine-glasses were laid for each place. Grace was said, of course, at the beginning, but at a certain moment in the meal a slip cloth was drawn away from the carver's place by a solemn servant and a second grace was said—a mumble that referred, I think, to what we *had* received. I had once been caught by this in the middle of a funny story, and forgot the point. I suppose that this signaled the dessert stage, for elaborate doilies and finger-bowls on fancy plates were brought in, merely for us to look at some oranges and eat two or three grapes. I used to wonder whether all this was a survival of the days when the men were left to their 'walnuts and wine', and,

if so, it was easy to see why grace had to be said fairly early. But it was a mystery why such formalities should be retained by two ladies of middle age, teetotallers, with very small appetites. Perhaps it was to pass the time, but more likely it was to keep the servants up to the mark, just as the drawing-room was 'turned out' every Tuesday, however spotless it might be.

The house had been built to last till doomsday; stone stairs were taken up as far as the first floor; steel burglar-proof doors protected the basement with its world of kitchens, pantries, sculleries, and cellars. The furniture was all of the substantial kind now called Victorian and valued as period pieces—huge bookcases, wardrobes, washing-stands, tallboys; but no chairs built for comfort. During the long years of my intimacy with these friends I can recall no change in the position of tables, looking-glasses, settees, and so on, not to mention any variety in the pictures, or vases on the mantelpieces.

The sister with whom I had most to do was the younger one, named Henrietta. I fancy that a boy had been hoped for and the wish had crept into her name, and indeed into her nature, for she was always masterful. After a while I softened her name into Yetta, the Norwegian form of it, dear to me from association with a friend of my mother's called Yetta Barnholt. Henrietta ruled everybody she came across, and if she made an enemy thereby she enjoyed a fight. The lines that Sir Herbert Richmond wrote of Gertrude Bell might well be applied to her:

*From Trebizond to Tripolis  
She rolls the Pashas flat  
And tells them what to think of this  
And what to think of that.*

She was the master mind in the home régime, and her elder sister, Mary Jane (always clipped to M'Jane), although nominally head of the house, had neither power nor influence. Her duties were confined to sitting at the head of the table, and 'doing' the tradesmen's books. She went into the kitchen every morning to receive instruction from the cook as to what would

be best for dinner, and what should be finished up for lunch, what groceries needed replenishing, what linen needed repairing, and so on. She was the more lovable of the two sisters, partly on account of her failings. She would lose bills, write cheques twice, mislay keys. . . . To help her to more business-like habits Yetta presented her with a roll-topped desk, but the multitude of little drawers only meant more places to lose things in, and it was pathetic to see her sitting in front of it disconsolate. Well, you could be sure of her sympathy if you made a mistake or forgot something; in fact she never saw faults in any one.

I knew only a little of the characteristics of these two sisters when I watched their arrangements for Switzerland, and I was amazed. They had been there many times before, and knew exactly what would be wanted to meet every emergency. 'The great point,' said Yetta, 'is to take as small packages and as few things as possible.' This harmonized with my ideas to the full, but their ideas of what was necessary were at the poles from mine. I wish I could remember all the things they had collected for the trip: there were clothes for every caprice of weather; a packet of tea, 'because you can't get drinkable tea abroad'; medicines for every complaint, including the one that my aunt Tony once referred to in a letter thus: 'I am suffering, dear, from what I cannot spell'; rolls of Mead's plaster in case of accidents; soap; biscuits; guide-books; mackintosh squares ('to sit on when we are out'); maps mounted on linen; scissors that folded up; a pocket aneroid ('to see how high we go up the mountain'); Dutch bulb-catalogues; dark glasses to wear in the snow; mending-kit and knitting-wool; two midget packs of cards (they didn't approve of card-playing, but were great at patience, about which they owned a book that detailed sixty-one varieties); unbreakable horn mugs that fitted into one another; elastic bands to gird up their skirts for going up a mountain-side; halma-men and board; a saucepan that served as a tea-kettle and a teapot too, because the tea, enclosed in a muslin bag, could be put in when the water came to the boil. All these things are confused in my memory as they were in

the packages, for the only system on which they were put close together was 'fitting in' (such as stockings snuggling round a medicine bottle). I gave great pleasure by my surprise and admiration as each item found its niche, and by exclaiming at the end, 'Why, it has all come out like a game of patience!' The only object I felt unhappy about was the methylated spirit-lamp. I told them of a note I had heard of posted up in a Swiss hotel—'All tin kitchen is defended.' M'Jane laughed softly and said that no one would ever *detect* her in evil-doing, and as time went on I found this to be no empty boast.

The sisters seemed to have all commodities in common; it was only on the intellectual side that the difference between them was glaring. Yetta was remarkably clever at all practical affairs; anything that she organized was sure to be correct to the last button; she always knew exactly what to do, where to go, how to get there, what it would cost, and how long it would take; trains were looked up and rooms engaged ahead. But I never saw her reading anything with interest except a guide-book. M'Jane was at the other extreme, caring nothing for plans, falling in happily with any arrangement, and unobtrusively pursuing her hobbies. Among these was botany, of which she had an extensive knowledge in spite of the fact that her only garden consisted of a few square yards of 'leads', richly endowed with London soot. One of the chief attractions of Switzerland was the chance it gave her for finding plants that she had met with only in her reference books. These were two huge illustrated volumes, strongly bound to stand wear and tear, and heavy with many coloured plates. It was over these that I noticed the first rift between the two sisters. M'Jane gave way to Yetta in nearly everything, but there were one or two points about which she was obstinate (delightfully so, I thought). I saw her firmly placing these books at the bottom of one of the trunks, paying no attention at all to Yetta's look of annoyance and protest of 'Must those heavy things really be taken?' To my amusement they became a permanent cause of unrest and acrimony throughout our trip whenever repacking had to be done.



As a final piece of advice they suggested that I should waterproof my walking skirt, since sudden showers must be expected. This sounded good, and I asked how it was done. 'Quite easy; you take it out of the band, dip it in a gallon of water containing a solution of. . . .' Then followed queer things like gum arabic; but I had lost count after the first sentence, for the very idea of taking a skirt out of its band was enough for me, since I had no notion how to get it in again, and decided to get wet and be done with it. This reminded me of the flask of brandy I forgot to take to America, and I told them that I should be sure to take it in my trunk for Switzerland. They were so shocked that I dropped the subject, fully intending, however, to take it in lieu of waterproofing my skirt.

Yetta undertook to get the tickets and post them to me, and in a few days they arrived in a little green case, with instructions to be at the station on the following Monday morning a little before nine. I spent most of the interval in selecting the rigidly necessary for my small trunk, and then in tidying up my room and destroying old letters in case I died abroad. The really pleasant things to take I left till Arthur came to spend Sunday afternoon with me. We agreed that sketching things were necessary, and at least one book. Keats was the final choice, because I could learn a lot of him by heart. The only thing beside the trunk was a leather satchel that I had bought in Boston, useful for stowing little odd things wanted in train or boat, and for carrying sketching things when we were walking, for it could be slung over my shoulder.

When everything seemed complete Arthur said, 'Now are you absolutely ready for to-morrow morning? Tickets, money, small change?' 'Yes. I've put three fivers in my ticket case, and my purse with small change in my satchel, with a handkerchief and extra scarf. See, here they are.' But there they weren't. All present and correct except the ticket case. I glanced round the room, expecting to see it on the mantelpiece, or some such natural perch. Nowhere. 'I must have packed it by mistake,' said I, and made a few dives into the trunk with-

out result. 'Let's comb the room,' said Arthur, and so we did, even to turning out every drawer. Then in some disgust I turned out all the things in my trunk that had been squeezed in so cunningly. When all were put back we began on the room again, in the unlikely places, behind the chest of drawers, under the rug. 'You might have carried it into the kitchen,' said Arthur, 'let's have a look.' But the bald sink and gas-ring were incapable of harbouring a stowaway. Unfortunately I had no Miss Rogers to call upon for help; she could get any one out of any hole; but she had left, and I was now sharing a flat with a stranger, who was out for the day; and no one had been in to see me and taken the case off by mistake. It looked like one of those murder stories where the corpse is found in a sealed room. But it was no laughing matter. My purse contained nothing more than silver enough for first expenses, and Arthur had only a few shillings in his pocket. Banks were shut, even if I could have afforded to take out any more money. Clearly I should have to give up the trip and send a telegram to Yetta.

We were wondering how best to word this when we heard the key in the door indicating the return of my neighbour. I was so full of spleen that I would have appealed anywhere for help, but expected no more than kind sympathy when I waylaid her in the passage and told her my trouble. 'Let me have a look,' said she cheerfully, 'I have a flair for finding things.' After going over the places we had already searched, she went into the kitchen, at which we couldn't help laughing. 'I noticed that your room was peculiarly tidy,' said this female Sherlock Holmes, 'free from one's usual clutter of papers lying about. Have you been destroying old stuff? Letters and things?' Yes I had, so she suggested the dustbin. We had one of those grey sanitary things, emptied officially daily, and my latest deposit into it had been the vegetable parings and other refuse from lunch. I was disgusted at the idea of unveiling these, but she urged me to leave no potato unturned, and soon I came upon a lot of discarded papers, and amongst them the precious green case. In another few hours it would have been

carried away by the dustman. As soon as Arthur had gone I went to her room to thank her again, and express admiration of her acumen. 'I didn't like to tell you in front of Mr. Hughes, lest he should laugh at me,' said she, 'but I always carry on my watch-chain this little charm. It's an eye of Horus, very valuable. You can see some just like it in the British Museum. It was given me by an egyptologist, who told me that the little god in it would always find anything I lost.'

## § 2

We had not been travelling many hours before I realized the comfort of being with some one who could arrange things ahead. There was none of the adventurous freedom of my time in America, but a foreign country was so new to me that every object and incident was exciting. Getting through the customs at Calais—my first experience of French *politesse*—disappointing. Buying a brioche at Amiens refreshment room—my first experience of French *cuisine*—celestial. Our way from Geneva to Chamonix was by diligence, and I thought of the schoolboy's howler about Caesar contending into Gaul on the top of a diligence. Never before had I known what dust and thirst could be. We pulled up half-way at some hostelry; other passengers were allaying their thirst, and I boldly ordered a lemonade, thereby shocking M'Jane and Yetta. They thought it was not the thing to be seen drinking outside a public house. More the thing, I argued, than to be seen doing it inside. But they were not amused, and I bore in mind that any reference to 'drink' was taboo.

In order to give me the best possible holiday Yetta had picked out all the places, however well known to herself and her sister, that would interest me most, and be most representative of the scenery, including a few famous spots, and others less frequented and more 'distinguished'. Our first objective was Mont Blanc, whose height I had learnt at school, but of which I knew no more than a fellow pupil who had spelt it Blanc Mange.

'What war is on?' I asked, as we rattled into Chamonix, for men in uniform were making menacing approaches to our diligence, and I hoped to have fallen in with one of those revolutions always going on in France.

'Those aren't soldiers,' said Yetta, as she singled one out for notice, 'they're hotel attendants. Each one wants to capture a customer for his hotel. Lots of people don't decide their hotel till they get to a place.'

My room was very small, and completely bare of everything but necessities. The wooden floor was pock-marked, the result, so I learnt, of continual wear from climbers' boots. How glad I was of a wash and change from my dusty things, and how hungry I was. To my dismay I heard that instead of being seven o'clock, a natural time for dinner, it was only six o'clock, for we had come out of Switzerland into France, and the times varied. That hour seemed endless; the weather was cloudy, and the outlook from my window reminded me of Wales on a wet day.

Next morning I woke to find the sun streaming in, and jumped up at once to look out of the window. Honestly, I nearly fell down with surprise. There was Mont Blanc, cloudless, dazzling, right against me. The shout I gave brought Yetta to my door. 'Ah, yes,' said she, smiling with pleasure at my excitement, 'I chose that room for you on purpose. My sister and I know the view quite well, and we have said nothing to you about snow mountains so that you might have this surprise. We were so glad that it was cloudy yesterday when we were all so tired. You have got the full beauty just at the right moment. Hope you weren't disturbed by the early starters.'

'I was too fast asleep to be disturbed, but who are they?'

'The people in the hotel who are making for the top to-day. There'll be a gun fired when they reach it. Their progress is watched through that big telescope you see below in the yard.'

'Are *we* going to do any climbing?' I asked, knowing that it was either ordained beforehand, or impossible.

'No, rope-work is too much of a business; we will walk

far up the slopes, though, and we can climb to Montenvers, and cross the glacier.'

I found this kind of expedition quite exciting enough, for Yetta had planned each outing cleverly so that some complete surprise should reward a tough walk, no matter from what centre we started. Once, I remember, we trudged upwards for several hours, to come suddenly upon a ridge with the whole Bernese Oberland stretched in front of us. And our leisurely pace had its advantages, giving M'Jane a chance to botanize and me to make a quick sketch. I was completely satisfied, except within. The mountain air and long walks gave me an outrageous appetite not shared by my companions. Our breakfast consisted of *café complet*. I made it as 'complet' as I could, but was ravenous by midday, when our lunch at some little mountain shanty consisted of *café complet* again. Once, on noticing several people having eggs, I proposed that we should have some too. Yetta thought it rather extravagant, but I shall never forget those glorious *aufs sur le plat* that they served us.

Afternoon tea we used to contrive in our hotel on our return from a long walk. M'Jane engineered it. During breakfast, no matter what the hotel, whether crowded or sparse, she managed to steal several rolls, concealing them in her lap, and taking great pride in the fact that neither Yetta nor I caught her in the act.

In the afternoons, while she was manœuvring her 'tin kitchen' with equal stealthiness, I was dispatched downstairs to procure some milk. The first time I was sent on this errand I thought up a polite way of asking for it in French, using a word for a jug that I had learnt in a 'vocabulary'. The waiter was hopelessly puzzled, and then said, 'If Mademoiselle would speak English!' I did, and received the milk at once. A bit humiliating, considering the large proportion of my life that I had spent in 'learning French'. However, on one occasion I came out strong. An old lady in an hotel wanted a footstool, and none of us could remember the French word for it. 'Leave it to me,' said I, and approaching the proprietor

I said, 'Un petit table pour les pieds, s'il vous plaît.' He nodded and brought one. In fact I could generally manage to scrape together some words that would do to ask the way, the price, the time, or some dire necessity we had forgotten. My trouble began when the natives replied. Here it was Yetta who came in. She couldn't speak French but she had the far rarer gift of being able to understand it; so together we managed quite well, I asking the question, and she standing by to listen for the answer. In remote regions, among the Swiss peasantry, I was helpless. Once we were far away from the hotel up a mountain-side, all set and eager for tea, which we had brought with us, stolen rolls, milk, tin kitchen and all. No, not all. M'Jane had packed the basket and forgotten the matches. Yetta let fly and scolded heartlessly. I couldn't bear it, and offered to explore among the few chalets we had passed *en route*. 'They must have matches,' said I as I started off. No doubt they had, but the word *alumettes* made no impression, nor did any gesture, and I have wondered what one *could* do to express matches. I had to go all the way back to the hotel, and was foolish enough to try a short cut through a lane so deep that it had not enjoyed fresh air for centuries. A cup of tea can be too expensive. If M'Jane herself had struggled in the chalets she would very likely have succeeded, for it was one of the intellectual surprises that she sprung on me that she could carry on animated conversations in patois with our carriage-drivers and other country folk whose talk was Greek to Yetta and me. How had she picked it up? Probably from deep sympathy with their lives, and getting to talk with them 'on the quiet', as she did everything.

The only substantial meal of the day was the dinner in the evening, and even that was not always substantial enough for me; very lengthy and interesting, but I often felt that I could have gone through it all again. The social side was pleasant, for we made friends with our fellow guests, especially when we were in one of those high-up and distinguished hotels where only English people penetrated as a rule. We came across Edmund Gosse complaining of the inferior company at our

hotel in Saas-Fee; we met Septimus Buss (a clerical brother of Miss Buss) climbing up the pilgrim path from Saas im Grund; we found Joshua Fitch sitting disconsolate in St.-Luc, as though educational methods had taken all joy from his life. In the high Weisshorn hotel we made friends with a certain Sidney Flemming. 'Do you happen to know a friend of mine called Percy Flemming, the eye-specialist?' said I. 'Not very well,' was the reply, 'he's only my brother.'

There were about a dozen of us at that hotel, all English, and one day the proprietor made a gesture by arranging an all-English dinner. It was a hotter day than usual, quite the last on which to welcome an English dinner. The only course I can now recall was a Christmas pudding, always hateful to me even in my childish days and in the wintry season. The poor man understood that it should be served in flames of brandy, but having no brandy he used methylated spirit, and brought the dish in himself all aglow with pride. Among our company was a well-known artist named Stone, and that heroic man actually ate his portion, saying that he couldn't bear to hurt the feelings of old Mosoni.

In one of our specially English hotels two strangers came in one day, and behaved queerly enough to alarm me. They talked and gesticulated across the table in a violent temper, and I expected that they would come to blows. Yetta laughed at my concern, 'They are only Italians, probably discussing the weather or some travelling difficulty; they never talk quietly.'

That dreaded period of hotel life—the after-dinner stretch of boredom—was not so bad in Switzerland, for we all had plenty to do, and very seldom fell back on *halma* or patience. Yetta would have maps and guide-books spread about her and be planning our itinerary for the morrow, filling in gaps with knitting. She even taught me to knit. But what I much preferred was to make pencil sketches of the people in the room. Nobody minded this; indeed they all took great interest in being done, and wanted to see the results. M'Jane spent her time mostly in making up the accounts. As the day went on she paid for everything, and then made apparently

scrupulous calculations as to how much Yetta and I had to pay her. I thought of how my brothers used to say that on this system it was the man who paid who came off worst. I'm sure that M'Jane forgot much of her outlay. Her next business was to enter in her diary everything that had happened during the day, even vagaries of weather. These duties performed, she then revelled in her hobby, looking up in her botanical books any specimens she had found, and setting aside any worthy ones for her *hortus siccus* at home. Failing any such acquisitions, she would go over her Dutch bulb catalogues, to mark what she would order for the autumn. This I used to call 'M'Jane bulbing'. Meanwhile we chatted freely with our fellow guests, and it was owing to some point being raised by one of them—some doubt as to which of the Queen's children had married whom—that I discovered another of M'Jane's odd accomplishments: she had a complete and reliable knowledge of the Royal Family, and all its relationships, to the remotest cousin. The oddity of this lay in the fact that the sisters, although conservative to the core, were quite militant liberals, following every turn of Gladstone's mind with religious enthusiasm. At least that was true of Yetta. Of M'Jane I had my doubts, guessing that she had secret leanings towards more colourful politics and even towards the Church.

On Sundays we used to take a walk of no great length, giving a rest to sight-seeing, sketching, and botany, and sitting about to read. It was thus that I caught M'Jane with another book that she had privily packed—a selection of rather unusually deep religious *pensées* and poems. When I showed great interest in these she said, 'I keep this in the background, dear, as my sister does not care for it. She has been embittered about all kinds of religion. You see, we are Unitarians, and are looked upon as atheists, and by many people as inferior socially.' That seemed to me an absurd idea, and as soon as occasion offered I asked Yetta what the Unitarian creed was that it should be thought so disgraceful. The answer came out as pat as from a penny in the slot: 'We believe in the



father-hood of God, and the brother-hood of man.' 'But surely,' said I, 'that's just what Church people believe, and can't be offensive to any one?' She shrugged her shoulders and spread out her hands, and then added a definition of the sect that evidently pleased her greatly. It was the remark made by a business man who had been asked what Unitarians believe: 'I don't know what they believe; all I know about them is that they pay twenty shillings in the pound.'

Her scrupulous honesty about money amounted to a religion in itself, a kind of odd mammon-worship. A penny was a sacred thing, never to be treated lightly, as in the phrase 'It's only a penny'. She had a slogan, 'Never lend more money than you can afford to lose'. Clothes and household goods were never to be given away unless they were clearly of no more use. M<sup>r</sup>Jane was far looser in her morals. She used to give away things surreptitiously to the undeserving, and try to look innocent when the inevitable question arose, '*What* has become of that spare strip of carpet?'

Yetta's animosity to the Church was aggravated by the behaviour of the usual visitors in the hotel. On Sunday morning they would turn the dining-room into a temporary church, and have the Anglican service performed by any clergyman who happened to be on holiday. All well and good, but the fuss in clearing the room, arranging seats, setting out flowers, and expecting silence in the hotel, was annoying to those who belonged to another communion and distasteful to many ordinary Church people. While Yetta remained rather snortingly aloof, M<sup>r</sup>Jane and I would sometimes go in search of any native gathering we could find. Once we enjoyed an ancient ritual to celebrate some saint. On the pilgrim path from Saas im Grund up to Saas-Fee there were a number of little chapels of a fascinating kind, and it was in the largest of these that we joined a congregation of peasants dressed in their gayest clothes, marching, singing, and carrying banners, and M<sup>r</sup>Jane understood some of what they were praying and singing about.

When we were in Berne we induced Yetta to go with us to

the cathedral, since the Lutheran service was bound to be fairly Protestant. Protestant it obviously was, for anything less like a Roman Catholic ritual it would be hard to imagine. Not a word could I understand, and had to deduce from the parson's manner in the pulpit (where he remained all the time) whether he was reading the Bible or preaching or praying. I got no hints from the attitude of the congregations, for they sat through everything, even when singing a hymn. At least I suppose it was a hymn, but the only sound was a kind of hum, given forth in a rhythmic swing mildly suggestive of a tune. Suddenly M'Jane passed urgent word along the pew that we were to go out. She was so seldom imperative in her mood that we knew it was not to be questioned, and sidled out at once, fearing she was ill. But when we got into the open air she seemed quite herself, and Yetta asked her what on earth she had ordered us out for. 'I saw Molly's face,' said she, 'and felt sure that one of her sudden bursts of laughter was imminent.'

## § 3

To those who know Switzerland it would be useless to name the centres we visited, and tedious to those who don't know it. I will only mention a few, just to give an idea of the trouble Yetta must have taken to plan a holiday that would give me an all-round idea of the country. We drove along the Rhône valley to the hotel at its head, and thence we climbed up by the side of the glacier to the St. Gothard Pass. We went by the rack-and-pinion railway to the Rochers de Naye. We cruised on Lake Geneva, and visited the Castle of Chillon. We had the exciting but rather fearful experience of groping along the wooden track through the Aarschlucht. And, far more delightful than any of these, we found remote places where we could gather the small blue gentian, *Linnaea borealis*, and even the very rare edelweiss.

We were at Saas-Fee one evening, at our usual after-dinner occupations, when I joined Yetta in her itinerary work for the next day. We had her big map spread out on the floor,

showing the mountain-ranges all grey and forbidding. 'How near we seem to Italy,' I muttered, thinking that perhaps one day Arthur and I might be rich enough to go there together. 'Let's go there to-morrow,' said Yetta quite quietly, without looking up, and running her finger along the map. 'We could do it from here, but it means a long walk, too far for M'Jane.' She was within earshot and immediately said, 'You two go; I shall be so glad of a day to myself here, to look up lots of flowers in my books.' Whereupon we seized maps and guide-books with fresh energy, and saw that we could reach the Monte Moro Pass if we put up somewhere for a night on the way, and then we could get back by the following night. 'The view from the summit is grand in the extreme,' I read aloud from the guide-book, and added, 'I could have told the author that.' Yetta was looking pessimistically for a possible place to spend the night. 'There's something they call an inn,' said she, 'but they say no more at all; goodness knows what it will be like.' 'But an inn is an inn,' said I, 'it must be able to take us *in*, and what more do we want?'

We were to be off by 6.30, and Yetta warned me to go as light as possible, taking nothing in my satchel but the barest needs for the night. Keats must stay behind then, but I couldn't go to Italy without taking some treasure to share it with me. Now I had got in my trunk a very small prayer-book that I never needed but kept by me for its association with my father. He had given it to me when I was four years old—a lovely little volume, bound in leather with a gilt clasp, and bright rubrics that cheered me through the litany. When I could read I thought it would be nice to follow what they were saying in my book, so one Sunday morning I took it to my brother, 'Tell me, Tom, how far they've got in this book. I want to begin reading it to-day in church.' 'Here you are,' said he, pointing to 'The wicked man'. 'How funny,' said I, 'that they should be starting to-day, just when *I* want to start!' 'They start there every time,' said Tom. I gasped, 'What! this whole book every time!' 'Yes, more or less,' said he, and I put off my scheme to a future date. In fact the print

was too small for easy use, but the little book was a constant companion, and I tucked it into my satchel for Italy.

Our route was unfrequented by tourists, and passed many little villages, each with its cupola-topped church tower, and sketchable bits everywhere, and the weather superb. I can't remember what we did for lunch, but I know that we arrived very tired and hungry at the 'Mattmark See Hotel'. I have stayed at many queer hostelrys in my time, but none quite so outlandish as that. We were too hungry to be critical of the supper, and too tired to do more than have a look at the lake—a dreary affair—before we felt inclined for bed. There was only one bedroom to be had, and this was only large enough to hold two little beds and a minute washing-stand furnished with a basin no bigger than a pudding-bowl and a jug of water to correspond, and one small towel. But there was no lack of moisture in the beds. Yetta, who was a folio edition of a woman, could hardly get into hers, and I spent much of the night bunching myself up so as to get as little of the damp as possible. 'It's a good thing,' said I, 'that we are to be called at four; we shan't have to be in these beds for long.' The early start was necessary, not only that we might get back to Saas by nightfall, but also that we might see the sunrise effects. Provided with some stale rolls by the inn (I guessed that bread was brought to them once a fortnight, and that we were near the end of a batch) for our lunch on the way, we started off along the roughest and stiffest road I have ever known. But what mattered the road, what mattered a poor night and a vile breakfast, what mattered anything at all, when one was so blessed as to be able to see the glow on the mountains before the sun rose? No sunset can equal it, nothing on earth can equal it. I think Beethoven must have had such a scene in his mind when he composed the *andante* movement of his Fifth Symphony.

We reached the top of the pass about midday, and allowed ourselves half an hour for seeing Italy. As we were struggling up I had at the back of my mind the blue distances in Titian's pictures, and now I saw what he had seen. I sat down in Italy

and champed my stale roll in a vast contentment. Thoughts of the great painters, thoughts of Hannibal, scraps of Roman history crowded into my mind, but the dominating interest was the knowledge that it was Virgil's country, and taking out my little prayer-book I wrote in it 'Italy', then the date, and then a favourite phrase from the *Aeneid*.

Whenever I am asked if I have visited Italy, I reply 'Yes,' and if the inquirer is sufficiently interested (very rare) to ask my impressions of it my reply is ready: 'I found the scenery magnificent; but I didn't think much of the food I had there.' People are usually too anxious to give their own impressions, and to recommend good hotels, to pursue their inquiries further.

I have never paid a proper visit to Italy, nor indeed have I ever been on the Continent at all since those jolly holidays over forty years ago. No doubt there have been vast improvements in travelling since then. But comfort and convenience deprive one of a lot of fun. One incident on our return journey gives me a pleasanter memory than a great deal of smooth travelling in later days on our own railways. At Dijon we had a stop of twenty minutes at about seven o'clock in the evening. The station restaurant was well prepared for the usual invasion of about fifty passengers, all seizing their only chance of dinner. We were swiftly ushered to our seats at long tables, and immediately waiters bore down upon us carrying our first course. Each waiter carried six plates of hot soup extended on his left arm, and dispensed them to us with his right, exhibiting such extraordinary skill that not a drop was spilt. No sooner was the soup delivered than each waiter dashed away and reappeared with plates of fish to be doled out in like manner. Course followed course, and plates were snatched away, till we reached the cheese. At this stage alms-boxes were handed round, into which we dropped our money, and then rushed to the platform where the train was panting for the start. I remember falling head-long on to the floor of the carriage, overcome with laughter. 'Do try not to laugh, dear,' said M'Jane; 'after that dinner, it may make you ill.'

## IX

### *Preparations*

#### § 1

THE year 1896 was humming with preparations for the Queen's coming Jubilee. Arthur and I too were humming a little on our own account. The Golden Jubilee had been the occasion of our first meeting, and we thought it a good idea to be married in the Diamond one. The risk was great, but the future was bound to be uncertain, wait we never so long. Arthur had built up a fair practice at the Bar, and I had saved a nest-egg of two hundred pounds, so, we thought, why not? and fixed on 1897 as our second lucky year. Realizing that I should have no more chance, when married, of paying 'bachelor' visits to my brothers, I determined to allot my remaining holidays between them—Christmas with Tom and Easter with Dym. A third visit, an earlier summer one, was thrown in, and it so chanced that these three visits served as a preparation for married life, since they gave me a glimpse of it in three important stages—in the second year, in the tenth year, and in middle age. The visits came in the reverse order chronologically, and that is the order I must follow.

It was in the summer that a barrister friend of Arthur's, named James Corner, invited us both to spend a fortnight at his place in Hereford. Holmer Park was a real 'place' in the old-fashioned sense—a mansion in large rambling grounds, with horses and carriages, friendly dogs, and other animals everywhere about. There must be hundreds of such places in England, and I should not mention our visit were it not for the unusual characteristics of the owners. Mr. and Mrs. Corner were rich and contented. Their one son was now grown up, and they were left alone to enjoy together a delightful middle age. I have come across a few wealthy people and an untold number of jolly people, but this combination of

wealth, jollity, and middle age is unique in my experience. The servants of the establishment seemed endless—maids, grooms, gardeners, and odd boys about, all busy over something. But it was Mrs. Corner herself who opened the door to us when we drove up from the station; and although we had resplendent meals, there was none of the fussy formality of being over-waited upon that detracts from the fun.

We were taken for long drives in the country, shown the cathedral and other interests of the town, including the old house that had once been the Butchers' Guildhall. Here the carvings amused us, for the sainted bullocks with wings and what looked like haloes gave the impression of the beasts in Revelation. We had lazy afternoons pottering in the garden, the stables, the kennels, and the poultry-runs, or lying in hammocks and reading. New books and periodicals were scattered about untidily everywhere, competing with the dogs for the best chairs. In short, it was a house to delight a man, being at once comfortable and well mauled.

But it was the talk that I enjoyed most. I never can see why 'shop' should be considered boring. I wanted nothing more entertaining than to hear Mr. Corner and Arthur discussing their cases and the clever advocacy of Carson and other legal stars of the day. I would hear tantalizing scraps like this: 'My case was quite hopeless, but I saw my little jury.' 'The judge was hesitating . . . he might come down on either side . . . so I gave him a cushion to sit on—a little case on all fours with ours—and he sat.' Both Mrs. Corner and I were pleased with one of her husband's stories, because it showed how a woman could outwit men: this female criminal had to be conducted by train to prison in the charge of two police-officers. At a junction there was a change and a short wait, she demanded to be released in order to visit the ladies' room; the two men kept guard outside the waiting-room door; time passed, and they grew anxious about catching their train; on investigation they found that the inner room was connected with the first-class one, and their prisoner had merely walked quietly through and was well away.

When Mrs. Corner and I were alone we had many pleasant talks. She had no pretensions to learning or wide reading, but she had acquired a philosophy of life that filtered through to me as she talked. It might have sounded mere commonplace had it not been illustrated every hour of the day by her own life; and later on I learnt that she and her husband had had their full share of trouble. 'I'm old enough to give you some advice on married life, dear,' said she, 'and, believe me, to be really happily married is a work of art, just like a painting or a piece of music, and I think myself that it's the greatest of all. Don't be surprised if there are dark shadows too. Surely life without any griefs or worries would be as fatiguing as if there were nothing else, and certainly dull.'

'What do you think,' said I, 'of Dr. Johnson's remark when he heard that a married couple had never had a quarrel—"What a damned dull life they must have had!"'?"

'Did he say that? Then I don't think much of his wisdom.'

'I'm so glad you feel like that,' said I, 'for it has always seemed to me neither funny nor true.'

'The wonder to me,' said Mrs. Corner, 'is that any one thought it worth preserving. I suppose the old fellow was thinking of those humdrum couples who seem to live like vegetables with no spirit even to be annoyed.'

Encouraged by her views on this subject I then asked her opinion of another thing that had troubled me a little. An uncle's kindly advice had been, 'Be sure you don't expect too much of one another.' This seemed to me such a half-hearted insipid way of starting a great adventure. 'Yes, yes,' broke in Mrs. Corner eagerly, 'fancy being cautious all the time, afraid to ask, afraid to give, lest you should be asking too much or giving too much! No, dear, just go headlong at things together, and life will get more splendid as time goes on.'

## § 2

The visit to my brother Tom in the Christmas holidays of '96 showed me married life at a mid-way stage, and in



circumstances unlike that of the Corners. Tom was classics master in the High School at Middlesbrough, and lived in a small house in the town with his wife and two boys aged nine and eight. Naturally economy was necessary, but Nell had brought it to a fine art and obviously enjoyed it. This suited my tastes, and one year we had had a race to see which should spend less on clothes. 'Mind, Molly,' said Nell, 'you've got to put down every penny you spend, if it's only a bit of boot-mending.' The fact that she actually won this race throws a light on her character, for I was near the limit in doing without. Another trait we had in common was the love of little unnecessary expenditures, such as morning coffee at Amos Hinton's when we were shopping. And we never went for a country walk with the little boys without a packet of sweets. Nell used to excuse herself for this by saying, 'Sweets adds'—a phrase made more convincing by its oddity of grammar.

Nell and I together tried all sorts of cooking dodges. Her main cookery book was one issued by some meat-extract company. 'They are splendid recipes,' she explained, 'if you do all they say and just leave out the meat-extract.' Susan, the little daily maid, fetched and carried, stared and laughed, and I am sure hoped for failures, for these she was allowed to carry home, where her young brother, she assured us, was in bed, in a creditable condition.

My term had ended earlier than the school terms, so that I arrived some ten days before Christmas. This provided me with another preparation for married life. On the morning after my arrival the two little boys, Viv and Llew, showed me with great pride the copy-books they had been doing: 'Auntie is coming' was displayed a dozen times in large round hand. While I was loudly admiring these Nell broke her scheme to me: would I be a brick and give them a short lesson in arithmetic every morning?

I was glad that we were allowed to use Tom's study for these lessons, for no one could have done arithmetic in the drawing-room. Here Nell had carried out the vogue of the

day. The fireplace was draped with art serge and muslin to represent a spider's web, with a huge imitation spider involved in it. Bulrushes stood in a big jar, wooden stools had red satin ribbon tied round them, and a mirror on the wall had water-lilies painted on it. I shouldn't remember these items so well (for the family naturally avoided the room) had it not been for the piano, on which I practised every day.

Nell had timed things well. The boys were 'just about to begin division', she told me brightly. Now Mr. Harding had made a great point of keeping clear for children the two meanings of division. But I flung these to the wind, and fell back on the 'Nines into eight won't go' method. Each side of me sat an eager little nephew. On my right Viv forged ahead, but on my left Llew hung back and pleaded his youth: 'I think I am too small for division, Auntie.' Now Nell had warned me that this kind of thing might happen, but that Llew was quite as capable as Viv. So I agreed heartily, 'Quite right, darling, you are far too little for division. You shall do a nice long addition while Viv and I are busy.' So saying I set him an easy and laborious sum. After a bit I sensed that the eyes on my left were wandering towards the problem that Viv and I were bent on (involving oranges and boys), and presently a voice, 'I think I *could* do a little division, Auntie.' Very soon he was doing quite as well as Viv at it and I praised his success. He then asked leave to go downstairs, and came running up again to his seat to begin another division. 'I wanted to tell Susan that I had done goodly.'

As a set-off to the morning hour of arithmetic there was a much pleasanter duty for me every evening before the boys went to bed. They demanded a story. For this I had to fall back on any plots I knew, and since they were as anxious as Toddy to have everything as 'bluggy' as possible, it was usually one of the good old tragedies. One night as I was starting *Macbeth* with the usual 'once upon a time' they stopped me to ask how many people were going to get killed. After a hasty mental calculation I said 'Eight'. 'Oooh!' they exclaimed, and settled themselves in joyful expectation.

To keep my brain to the sticking-point their father provided me with a thriller. 'It was written,' said he, 'by a man called Phillpotts, an old schoolfellow of mine—but it's not half bad.' I found *The End of a Life* very exciting, and though I have not seen it since I can even now remember its theme and many of the details. The villain takes vengeance on his enemy (a rival in love) by committing suicide in such a way that it will look like murder for which his enemy will be hanged. All goes well for the plan and black for the victim. The novelist's difficulty lay in getting the dastardly plot exposed, and he could do no better than invent a repentant accomplice. I am sure that a modern detective-story expert would think up something more subtle.

Until term was over Tom was away at work most of the day. He never said much about his life at school, and my knowledge of it comes mainly from old pupils. One of these writes to me that *awe* was the main feeling they had for him, and that beside him the headmaster was insignificant. This was chiefly due to his scholarship and the standard of hard work that he demanded of the boys, who valued his quiet approval beyond all praise. The letter goes on to say, '*Every alteration a mistake* was a grim doctrine rigidly enforced, but we learnt to live up to it, and it was a most valuable part of the training we got, to see the end of a sentence before we put pen to paper.'

The same pupil came to visit the school later on, to observe various masters at work, as a preparation for his own teaching career. 'I was not impressed,' he writes, 'by these until I went to see the Sixth Form Latin. They did one ode of Horace (iii. 21) and I sat entranced; the University had given me nothing like it. All that the ode contained was brought out, the poem was dissected without being mauled and then reassembled in the other medium with no loss of its appeal. I never walk through that particular room without hearing the familiar voice—"O *kindly* jar!" I ought to add that throughout my schooldays your brother was known as the one master who had no favourites. He had no moods either,

but was equable and imperturbable, which is very reassuring for schoolboys.'

Another old pupil tells me that Tom never ruled by terror, but rather by surprise and gesture, aided by dry humour, although he never 'made a joke'. He gives as an instance: 'I was once flying downstairs two and three at a time when just at a nasty bend I collided with Mr. Thomas head on. He never said a word, just lifted one eyebrow, gave me a pitying look and passed on his way, while I went on at a reduced speed with my tail between my legs.'

Tom's discipline in class is best summed up in a phrase current among the boys that 'no one *wanted* to fool about in his lessons'. I wonder whether a severe classical training (such as he had at Shrewsbury) does not in itself tend to produce that humorous poise, that ataraxy which nothing else can quite achieve.

Tom's equability was just the same at home as in school. I can recall no instance of annoyance on his part, although little family contretemps were as frequent as with most people. When Christmas Eve came all work was put away, and we laid ourselves out for enjoyment. My own spirits were raised by the post, for I heard that all my students had passed their examination, and that one of them, Miss Pechey, had got a first class in both theory and practice. The boys were excited, for their father took them to the shops to spend their saved-up pocket-money. They had happy recollections of their uncle Barnholt in this matter, for he won their hearts on his last visit to them by decking the mantelpiece every morning with little piles of coppers for them. Dear old Barnholt must have remembered his own childhood, and knew how much more exciting to a small boy are a few coppers that can be spent wildly, than a serious tip to be laid out cautiously under parents' advice or put in a money-box.

While the boys were out shopping Nell and I were left to cope with the food supply. She had accumulated a good store of Christmas cakes, fruits, and sweets, and we had little more to worry about than the goose. After all, this could just go

into the oven on Christmas Day. But the butcher had sent with it a huge parcel of giblets, and Nell didn't know what to do with them. Soup was ruled out, because it wouldn't make a complete meal. Then I remembered hearing Arthur talk of his mother's wonderful giblet pies, so I suggested that we should make a giblet pie for the midday Christmas Eve dinner. 'You make the crust,' said I, 'while I wash the giblets and put them in a dish, and Susan makes up the fire.' So we started, but 'What is this stuff?' said I, pointing to some dark purple matter in the parcel. Nell stopped her pastry-making to look. 'Oh, that's blood,' said she, 'I believe you make a kind of forcemeat of it, with crumbs and lemon and parsley.' I protested urgently against this plan, but she said it would fill up the pie and make it go further. As indeed it did.

'Giblet pie!' exclaimed Tom and the boys, when they sat down very hungry after the morning's shopping, 'that's fine!' and they all attacked the generous portions served out.

'What are these balls in the middle?' asked Tom.

'Blood and bread-crumbs, dear,' replied Nell.

Tom shuddered and pushed away his plate. 'I could, if occasion called for it,' said he, 'drink hot blood, but blood and bread-crumbs, no.' Whereupon, of course, the boys with a manly gesture pushed back their plates and refused to touch another mouthful. Nell was furious, and declared that they should have nothing else but bread and cheese. This they contentedly munched while she and I struggled with the pie, which I believe was as distasteful to her as it was to me. Susan did well that day, and I made Nell laugh by telling her of my friend Ursula Wood's remark that economy was one of the two things she most regretted in life. 'What was the other thing she regretted?' asked Nell. 'Tidiness. She said that whenever she tidied her studio she lost hours in looking for things that had been put in their proper places.'

On Christmas morning there was a discussion as to which church we should go to, for Tom was something of a pillar and there were two churches that vied with one another to get him to read the lessons.

'I have to be at St. John's to read the lessons, but you others may prefer St. Cuthbert's.'

'Oh, St. John's please, father,' cried both boys.

Tom noticed that they grinned at one another in a shame-faced way, so he asked for their reason.

'It's because,' said Viv, 'while you are reading the lessons the organist sits on the edge of his rail, and sometimes he gets a bit excited and. . .'

'Yes, go on,' said Tom, rather pleased at such an effect of his reading.

But Viv stopped and Llew burst in, 'And we always hope he will fall down into the choir.'

Christmas cards and presents kept the little boys happy all the afternoon. I had brought Llew *The Carpenter of Nazareth* (by Bird), fearing that it might be beyond him; but he was an exceptionally thoughtful boy and buried himself in the story, looking up now and again to ask a question. One poser I remember was: 'Auntie, what was there *before* God?' I told him that I didn't know, and that every one wondered and nobody knew. This quite satisfied him.

The next excitement was the pantomime. Tom feared I should be bored with it, but the little boys' delight was pleasure enough. Some of the jokes would certainly not have amused the Queen, and at a specially marked one Tom looked round at me, 'Now, Molly dear, you are getting at first hand the broad humour of the Early Comedy.'

I reminded him of our seeing *Hamlet* together in that theatre years ago, and asked him if the play had ever come to the town again.

'Yes,' said he, 'not long ago; and of course I went to see it. At the first interval a man sitting next me said, 'Do you happen to know if that young fellow in black comes into the play much?' I told him that he came in a good deal and most of the play was about him. 'Well, then, I'm off,' said he, and walked out.

Before I left for London and work again Nelly gave me a piece of sound advice. 'You are too kind to Susan, Molly;

it never does to be too friendly with any one whose life you have to order—because they take advantage.’ She was right, of course, but little Susan was hardly one to ‘take advantage’. When I laid two half-crowns in her hand as a parting gift, she looked at them in alarm and said, ‘You *daren’t* give me all that!’

## § 3

My final ‘bachelor’ holiday was fixed to be spent with Dym in Guernsey. Much had been happening to him since our holidays together in Cornwall. While I was away in America he had become engaged to a Guildford girl. Not long afterwards he obtained a good post in Guernsey, was married out of hand, and took his bride with him to his new home. I had ecstatic letters from him about their small house and strip of garden. It was quite a new experience for Dym to cut and roll the bit of grass, dig the beds, and plant cabbages and peas and beans. He said that every time he came in from College he had to go and see if anything was showing above ground. I had a special letter when the cabbages were visible from the window.

My first visit to them ‘to see how they and the beans were going on’ had caused me much excitement in the summer of ’95. It sounded homely and primitive, this island life among the beans and cabbages. Dym had been too much engrossed in his garden results to tell me anything else, and Bessie’s letters had been mainly full of warm welcome and instructions about the voyage. Pooh, thought I, what is such a little voyage after the Atlantic! (but I had not foreseen the Casquets). However, I knew a few things about Guernsey, gathered from school lessons and general chit-chat. It had ‘come over with the Conqueror’ and belonged to us, but had a government, a language, and a coinage of its own. The people lived by taking in one another’s washing. The land was so precious that you weren’t allowed to keep poultry because the hens would scratch up the little island. Golf had been forbidden because it involved making holes, intentional and unintentional, in the sacred turf. Old jokes I knew these to be, but my general

impression was of a life nearer to nature in the raw than anything I had hitherto met. Nevertheless I decided not to be caught again as I had been in Princetown, and packed not only an everyday and a Sunday dress but also the grand one I had worn at Dym's wedding—just in case.

That first visit to Guernsey had been as great a surprise to me as my first visit to Wales, only the other way about. On going to Wales I expected English conditions, and lo! the simple life. On going to Guernsey I had looked for the simple life, and lo! a civilization more sophisticated than any I had previously known. Society was highly developed, with colonels and majors and naval people in decent plenty. And I think my sister-in-law had made life still more complex by importing some Guildford notions, for Guildford is one of those provincial towns where people know what's what. To begin with the matter of clothes, my three dresses were a mere 'flea in the ocean' when compared with Bessie's wardrobe. For breakfast she had a pretty flowered dressing-gown. At ten she put on a simple business-like tailor-made costume for shopping in Peterport. On returning she changed into a workaday dress and an overall for kitchen operations. The overall was removed for lunch, and then, for the afternoon, a really good dress was put on for paying calls. When we came back a little exhausted from this strain on looking well and being polite, a loose tea-gown was the thing, and this remained on until it was time to dress for dinner. 'Bessie,' I exclaimed in dismay, 'what a lot of changing you go through in one day!' 'Yes, Molly, I do, and it seems a bit troublesome, but I do it from motives of economy. Nothing takes it out of a dress so much as to wear it for a job to which it is not suited.' Truly my two sisters-in-law had widely different notions of economy, and I felt them both to be sound; but I knew that sheer laziness would incline me to follow Nell's example rather than Bessie's.

And the routine for the day was as well planned as the garments. Not a minute was wasted. If I didn't finish my breakfast as soon as Bessie did she brought out her sewing. What I liked best was the morning visit to Peterport; the



little up-and-down streets fascinated me, with the glimpses between the houses of the harbour and shipping. I snatched time now and again to do a little sketch while Bessie shopped. Some jolly afternoons were spent in drives round the island; on one occasion this was in an extraordinary vehicle, a kind of combination of bath-chair and hansom cab. I was disappointed to find that there was no wild country, but houses straggling everywhere. I made polite admiration all the time, but enthusiasm, like love, cannot be simulated. 'Molly doesn't seem to be much impressed with our scenery,' said Bessie on our return from one of these excursions. 'Of course she isn't,' replied Dym, 'how can you expect a Cornishman to be stirred by any sea-coast after Hell's Mouth?'

Dym hated anything like sight-seeing, but he was obliged to tog up now and again to pay calls—a role in which I had never seen him before. He suffered gallantly, but refused to 'receive' the return calls. Any knock at the front door would make him rush up to a little room at the top of the house, which he called 'the study' in loving recollection of our old childhood's room in Canonbury—our city of refuge and sanctum. Here he could read and smoke in peace, safe from intruders. But there was one hearty old major who also loved this attic, and if Dym heard his voice he would call to him over the banisters to come up. I liked to listen to the Major's extraordinary stories and used to answer him back and be quite impertinent, to his astonishment and amusement. Meanwhile Bessie was downstairs being polite to his wife. I didn't feel mean, for I was sure that Bessie preferred this to the Major's conversation. I used to busy myself with a bit of knitting while his stories were going on, but I dropped so many stitches and left so many gaps that even the Major raised his eyebrows. I explained it as a new kind of open-work, much in vogue at the moment in London.

This had all been in their early married days. When I went over for my visit in the Easter of '97 I found some changes. For now my little one-year-old godson held the centre of the field. The dressing-gown, the overall, and the negligé

had longer innings. Fewer visits were paid, and the visitors who came to the house were only those who really wanted to come. Everything was far more interesting to me than before, particularly the daily expedition to the town for shopping. My knowledge of catering was almost limited to buying eggs and bacon for breakfast, and I was keen to pick up hints for my forthcoming household needs. The mere sight of the market was a satisfying artistic pleasure, the flowers, fruit, and vegetables giving such a profusion of colour. And how I admired and wondered at Bessie, for she had none of Nelly's happy-go-lucky style of shopping. She asked searching questions about the conditions of meat and vegetables, and gave orders in a clear-headed, decisive way. But one weakness she confessed to me—the only weakness in her whole character so far as I saw it. It was fish. Beyond the obvious cod, salmon, and lobster she didn't know one fish from another. Of course, in such a port, the fish-stall was always laden with glittering beauties, and the citizens were supposed to know all about their species and value. Before that stall Bessie would stand and point, saying hurriedly, 'Send me up two pounds of that.'

More eagerly than the catering did I watch the management of the godson, determined to learn all I could. I entered into the details of food and bath and cot, and heard all the correct things to do with a baby. In these matters, too, Bessie's organization astounded me. Little Barnholt ate and played and slept at regular times. For instance, while we were down at the market it was the servant's duty to take him for his morning outing. She had a standing order to return from this pram-parade at 11.55. When I showed surprise at the nicety of this hour Bessie explained: 'You see, if I say twelve, it sounds as if somewhere about twelve will do, but 11.55 means punctuality.' (By the way, I have found this quite a valuable device.) One day, owing to some little domestic hitch, I was allowed to take Barnholt for this morning outing. Never before had I been trusted with a baby entirely to myself, and my nervousness was increased by Bessie's many injunctions. I was to avoid busy streets, and hills; the pram must not be jerked at the kerb;

*Wedding Without Tears*

IN the summer of 1897 the whole country seemed given up to gaiety. The 'Queen's weather' of glorious sunshine began to work in the early part of the year and was repeating the glories of 1887. People from all parts were pouring into London, all the public buildings and shops were vying with one another in their decorations, and the coming Jubilee was the main topic of conversation. The lucky owners of windows overlooking the route of the procession were making small fortunes by letting seats.

A seat was quite beyond my means, and I was too old a Londoner to think of jostling among the crowds in the street. But luck, as usual, came my way. My ever-constant friends, M'Jane and Yetta, went to the great expense of hiring two rooms in Cheapside, high up, with windows giving good views of the road. This astonished me, for they were always ostentatious about their radical views, and it seemed inconsistent to pay money merely to watch homage being paid to some one who after all was only a fellow mortal. But at heart they were as conservative as any one, and almost fanatically loyal to the Queen, whose joys and griefs they had always seemed to share. With great forethought they invited some quite young cousins to see the procession, because these would be able to remember such an historical event when they were old. And for no good reason I was asked to share the fun.

And great fun it was. We all started off in two four-wheelers, M'Jane cumbered with two big baskets. We had to arrive early, for the streets were closed to traffic some hours before the ceremony. But there was no dull moment. Cheapside is historic enough when empty, but the overpowering interest now was to watch the increasing crowds getting wedged together and full of good-tempered excitement. Still more

amusing was the way in which every available peep-hole in Cheapside had its spectator: roofs, window-sills, some very perilous-looking ledges, and even chimneys. I guessed that Shakespeare must have seen something of the kind, probably in that very road—always the London route for a triumph.

Meanwhile the true inwardness of M'Jane's baskets was appearing. Cold chicken, tongue, and ham she had thoughtfully placed in sandwiches, so that at any exciting moment we could eat them with still an eye on the window. Lemonade, fruit, and chocolate were always within reach. For later in the day (when the procession should be over and there was a wait before we could get away) she had brought spirit-lamp and kettle for a big sit-down tea.

M'Jane preferred to busy herself in such matters rather than look at the crowds too much, for they made her dazzled and nervous. What an ordeal it must be for any one who is the centre of such a crowd, the one on whom all eyes are strained. The Queen was nearly eighty. Since it was considered easier for her to remain in her carriage than to enter the Abbey, as she had done for the former Jubilee, the open space outside the west door of St. Paul's was chosen as the site for the service of thanksgiving.

We watchers became aware that this service was over and that the procession had left the cathedral, from the indefinable stirring among the crowds below, very much as one becomes aware of the approach of a train from the behaviour of the people on the platform. The rumour, 'They're coming!' seemed to spread from nowhere. We could see the extra craning of necks and could hear the distant cheering, getting ever louder. Presently Captain Ames appeared. He had been chosen to lead the procession because of his great height and fine bearing. After him came long lines of soldiers and sailors of every kind, and from all parts of the Empire. No such representative procession had ever been seen in England before. As each fresh contingent appeared cheers poured forth. At last a roar of almost alarming strength told us that the Queen was at hand. I had not seen her since the early seventies,

when she drove along Essex Road (for some obscure reason) and I had been held up to get a view. I then saw a little lady in black and had been rather disappointed that she looked like anybody else. And now the quarter of a century didn't seem to have made much difference to her. It was the same little lady in black, but now she carried a parasol—a merciful protection not only from the blazing June sunshine but also from the sight of so many people perched in perilous spots. Specially engraved on my memory was her personal escort: on one side of her carriage rode her son, our long-beloved Prince of Wales, and on the other side her grandson, the Kaiser—both of them in resplendent uniforms, mostly white. All the brilliance of her surroundings merely emphasized the majesty of the little lady in black.

In all those rejoicing crowds I was the most joyful, for I was to be married early in July. As Arthur and I walked about the streets that evening to enjoy the decorations we regarded them as celebrations of our own crowning mercy. The only one I remember is the device of the old London and North Western Railway, displaying with greatly enlarged capitals, 'Longest, Noblest, Wisest Reign'.

For our wedding we needed no festivities, for the fact itself was feast enough. Nor did getting married present any dire problem. Our chief wealth was the fewness of our wants. The bits of furniture that we each had acquired for our rooms were almost enough to start with, but we were obliged to find somewhere to put them—somewhere to live. We had plenty of advice in this matter from our friends. One section of them said, 'Be sure you have a house, not a flat, because you will want a bit of garden.' The other section urged the advantages of a flat—'Easy to manage, easy to leave for holiday-time, and no stairs.' After looking at endless places of both kinds we fixed on a flat in the middle of Ladbroke Grove, said to be 'six-roomed, with kitchen and bathroom'. When we told the agent who was showing it to us that we could count only five rooms, he pointed to a dark cupboard, suitable for storing trunks, and said, 'This is the servant's room.' I record this to

show that such conditions were thought possible for a human being in '97. Arthur was so indignant with the man for suggesting such a thing that he was for walking out at once. I argued that there was plenty of room without the cupboard, and we decided to take the flat, for it was by far the best we had seen. Arthur scrutinized the terms of the lease in order to find some objection, but the only one he could discover was our being forbidden to keep pigeons. 'I don't *want* to keep pigeons,' said he, 'and heaven knows I never shall, but I refuse to be told that I mustn't.' So the clause was deleted.

Nothing then remained to be done but to have our various belongings moved to the flat, from Gray's Inn and the Ladies' Chambers, and supplement them with a few necessities. This involved a short gap for each of us to be homeless. Arthur took some furnished rooms in the neighbourhood of the Temple, and I spent the week with Mary Wood, who had long been promised that I should be married from her home in Camden Road. The idea was that our wedding gathering should consist of Mary and her sister Ursula, and our four brothers—two of Arthur's and two of mine. Since these last were all married, Arthur got one of his bachelor legal friends to act as best man. Custom appears to forbid this office being held by a married man, the reason for which only Frazer knows. Of course, Arthur's parson brother, Llewelyn, was to marry us, Tom was to give me away, and the others were just to rally round and cheer us on. I expect most people have such jolly designs for simplicity, and are thwarted by their friends.

The friend to thwart our little plan was Yetta. She was all for having the whole affair under her management, and for us to be married from her house in proper style. I told her that Mary was my oldest friend, that her house had been like another home to me, and that I had always promised to be married from it. Yetta at once conceded the claims of old friendship. 'Yes, quite right,' said she, 'I wouldn't dream of interfering with such a promise, although M<sup>r</sup> Jane and I will be greatly disappointed.' I ought to have guessed that this handsome admission was only a retreat to jump the better.

Presently she said, 'You will, of course, *start* from Miss Wood's house, and then I suppose you will be going away somewhere?' I hadn't thought about this, but supposed that would be the idea. 'Surely, then,' said she, 'you could step in for a few minutes after the ceremony to have our good wishes—just on your way to the station? You see M'Jane is not strong enough to go to the Church.' To this I readily assented. Next time I saw her she begged me to send round a few of our presents for M'Jane to see. 'But there aren't any to look at much—mostly tables and chairs and other sensible things that people knew we should want.' 'Well, then, just send a few of the small ones, and make a list of the others, for the people to see.' 'People?' said I, in alarm, my suspicions aroused, 'what people?' 'Only a few. I thought Miss Wood and your brothers might care to come in . . . and one or two other friends, perhaps,' she muttered vaguely. I hung back at this, knowing the brother mind. Then she added, 'Of course, we should have a little light refreshment for them.' At this I protested fiercely, but she flooded me with reasons, and from sheer exhaustion I gave in. When I told Arthur of my capitulation he laughed and said, 'It will please them, and will soon be over. Nothing matters to us. *We* have all the luck.' In a few days I had a letter from Yetta to say that invitations were being sent out, and would I supply a few addresses. The whole thing had become a 'reception'.

'The worst of it is,' I said to Mary, 'that I shall have to dress up to all this.'

'And a good thing, too. And the sooner you set about getting some clothes the better. Let's go off and get the wedding-dress, and lots of other things. You are such a silly about buying clothes, and you mayn't get me to help you like this for ever so long.'

My term at Bedford College ended at the beginning of July, and I had a whole week to spend with Mary having nothing at all to do but enjoy myself. So I fell in with her idea of getting some clothes, and we started off to Derry and Toms'. When it came to discussing the actual wedding-dress I felt

obliged to confess that Yetta was designing one of her little cousins to be a bridesmaid. 'In that case,' said Mary firmly, 'you must have something a bit bridal-looking.' 'As long as it isn't white satin and a train and a veil, then.' 'No, only a cream-coloured soft silky thing, walking length, and a picture hat. It will come in quite useful afterwards for a dance or a garden party.' The fact was, I was putty in Mary's hands, and agreed not only to this but to a grey coat and skirt to 'go away' in, as well as a lot of other accessories that Mary thought the right thing for married life. Among these was an extremely bright dressing-gown. The dress-maker was a Frenchwoman, very sympathetic and ready with suggestions. She recommended for the hot weather a little outdoor cape, in this way: "e clothe the shoulder and 'e not make warm." White gloves, white shoes and stockings—these all seemed to me most extravagant, particularly a white lace handkerchief. When I protested Mary said that I might not be married again for quite a long time.

One of our expeditions during that week was a visit to the church where I was to be married. St. Andrew's, Holborn, we found quite interesting. Its very position was odd, between three streets—Holborn Viaduct, St. Andrew Street, and Shoe Lane. From an old print in the church we saw that it once stood at the top of 'Heavy Hill' (so called because it led from prison to gallows); but since the building of the viaduct one has to step *down* to the entrance. The pulpit had a special interest for us, not because Wesley and Whitefield preached from it (they seem to have done this from every City pulpit) but because of the courage of the rector Hacket during the Civil War. A puritan 'Kensitite' of the time came in one day when Hacket was reading the service and forbade him to go on with it, at the same time pointing a pistol at him and asserting that it was his duty to shoot, because he had been sent by the Earl of Essex. Hacket's reply was simple: 'Very good, you go on with your duty, and I'll go on with mine.' He then resumed his prayers, and of course the soldier retired. Naturally I was interested in the registers, and was glad to learn that



a famous lawyer and a famous poet (Coke and Hazlitt) had been married there. We already knew that Disraeli had been baptized there, found out that this had been when he was thirteen, and wondered whether these years had been considered 'ripe' enough for using that special service that we had never heard.

What with one thing and another the days of that week passed happily away, and I forget our other expeditions.

Meanwhile Yetta had not been idle. Her organization had been extending. 'As our house is so much nearer the church than Miss Wood's, it would be far better if you and she were to come to lunch here, and then she can dress you here, and change you again here into your travelling-dress. So please have your wedding-dress sent here.' We laughed. 'Yetta's suggestions,' said I, 'are like those of the boarder in *Rudder Grange*—the worst of them is, they are always right.' 'All we shall have to do, then,' said Mary, 'is to spend a leisurely morning here, step into a hansom and go off in time for their lunch. At all events you will still be married *from here*.'

I have had many a jolly drive in a hansom, but that was certainly the jolliest. It was a perfect summer day, and the familiar old streets, that I had often paced along to school with varied feelings, took on that morning an unsubstantial, fairy look.

The lunch was a solemn business, an ordinary midday meal unrelieved by any alcoholic note. Although there were several young cousins around the board, obviously expectant of some fun, I sensed that any levity on my part before the ceremony was misplaced. I was glad when it was over and Mary took me up to a bedroom to 'robe' me, and we could fool about a little in the process. But we felt more solemn when we saw the carriage that Yetta had ordered to take us to the church, and the bow of white ribbon that the driver displayed on his whip. I amused Mary on the way by telling her of Arthur's habit of running everything up to the last moment. 'We shall no doubt see him pelting along Holborn, trying to overtake us.'

As I went down the steps to the church I was overjoyed to see my two brothers, Tom and Dym, grinning a welcome at

me. 'Arthur's here all right,' said Dym, 'getting jolly nervous that you won't turn up in time.' Yetta, of course, had gone before me, and as Tom led me up the nave he told me how they had all been amused by her telling him and every one else exactly what they had to do. 'A bit stiff, you know, when it came to informing Llewelyn.' I suppose no woman forgets her last walk in her maiden name, and no woman can have a happier memory of it than I have: on the arm of an ideal brother I was walking to an ideal husband, and as I went was vaguely aware of quite a little congregation of old pupils and students and friends, as well as several of Arthur's barrister friends. Among them I specially noticed, and managed to greet with a smile, Mrs. Keyes, in a brightly coloured new bonnet.

Arthur and his best man, Tom and I, with my little bridesmaid behind, were all present and correct—but no Llewelyn. Yetta grew very restive and was actually making a movement to haul him out of the vestry when he bustled forth and began. There had been a great deal of argument in the press as to whether a woman ought to promise to obey her husband, and some brides had omitted the word. So I said my 'obey' firmly, feeling the pleasure of having no longer to order other people's lives, but to be ordered myself. I still seem to feel the grip with which Arthur 'took' me, and the fierce way in which he pressed the ring home. Llewelyn felt it his duty to give us a short address, but as we had had ten years to consider the matter we hardly needed an exhortation as to our duty; the mere idea of Llewelyn in his canonicals solemnly preaching to us struck me as so absurd that I had to fix my attention on the great east window to keep from laughing.

I had always wondered why people were so long in the vestry after a wedding 'just signing their names'. Now I discovered that there were other little ceremonies apart from the registration business. The atmosphere was completely different from the solemnity by the altar. Even Llewelyn unbent. It seems that the best man is entitled to be the first to kiss the bride. But Arthur was too quick for him. Indeed

we had fun enough, crowded in that small vestry, but we had no joke to compare with the one at Dym's wedding: his mother-in-law was let loose with the register and signed her name on the dotted line for the 'officiating priest'.

Arthur and I retreated through a back door of the church to one of the lower streets where the carriage was waiting for us. 'A cigarette,' said Arthur, 'I simply must have.' On our return to the house we found M'Jane and a few of her friends assembled in the drawing-room to greet us. 'Miss Thomas and Mr. Hughes,' sang out the parlour-maid as she pompously flung open the door, and then went scarlet at her mistake; but the laughter with which it was greeted was just the pleasantest thing to happen. A crowd of guests were on our heels, and a very jolly reception it was, in spite of its being on a strictly teetotal basis. I was sorry to see that the beautiful carpet had been covered by a drab-coloured drugget, 'in case,' so Yetta explained, 'some one should drop a strawberry.' The few wedding presents available had been spread about to make conversation. Conspicuous among them shone Tony's gift, a pair of Sheffield silver candlesticks that had been made for my Grandfather Vivian untold years ago. Mary Wood's comment on them was: 'With these, Molly, no matter how poor you are, you will always look grand.' My full list of presents was quite imposing. Tom sidled up to me and whispered, 'So sorry, darling, that I've sent you nothing—not even a trifle to put on your list. It was a choice between a present and coming to the wedding, and I didn't think you could be properly married without me.' 'Quite right,' said I, 'but you might just see what I've put on the list.' Arthur's brother Alfred was now very well off, and had given us a big cheque. I recorded it thus: 'A. W. Hughes—cheque'; then next to it I had recorded: 'T. E. Thomas—cheque.' Tom was soon at my side again, 'Molly, you're a brick; I feel like that Ben Adhem chap on the second night, and no one will be so indelicate as to inquire about amounts.'

We had made no plans for going away, leaving our destination to the luck of the moment. Scraps of consultation on

the point between Arthur and his best man floated to me now and again: 'But you must have some idea where to go?' 'Well, Tooting sounds absurd, and Ponders End sounds heavy, but beyond these I don't care . . . no, it's no use asking Molly . . . she cares still less.' 'How about Salisbury . . . cathedral and Stonehenge . . . I know a good hotel . . . shall I look up a train and wire for a room? How long are you staying?' 'Only the week-end. I've got a case on Tuesday.' I noticed that a happy look spread over the best man's face at Arthur's willing assent to his making the arrangement, and that he sped off at once on his errand.

I soon faded out of the company for Mary to change me into my travelling garb, and Arthur too had got away somewhere to change into a quite old suit and tie much the worse for wear. There were hearty farewells and gratitude to Mary and our kind hostesses, M'Jane and Yetta; our small baggage was put on a cab, and the order 'Waterloo' was given by Dym to the cabby. We thought that we were off by ourselves at last. But that was where we erred. The cabby seemed a bit stupid about the route (not that we cared), and when we reached Waterloo there were the boys to receive us—Tom and Dym, Llewelyn and Alfred, and the best man—as masculine a send-off as any bride ever had. One face among the boys that day was sorely missed by both Arthur and me. His greatest friend, Bourne, our mainstay through our long years of engagement, had recently gone off to South Africa, that whale of a place that swallows our straying prophets and knows better than to cast them home again. He's there still.

It was not the thing in those days for a woman to be served at the buffet, so I was ensconced in the train with some light literature while the six boys went off to have a stirrup cup—medically necessary in Alfred's opinion after the strain of the reception. Later on I was told about that scene in the refreshment-room. The presence of parson Llewelyn, and the splendour of garments and button-holes, gave rise to knowing glances from every one. Arthur, in his old suit, hung in the background and tried to look like a poor relation. He might

well have passed it off thus had he not tried to clinch it by inclining his head towards Alfred and saying to the barmaid, 'That's the bridegroom.' Alfred was the tallest and handsomest of the group, and the best dressed, in grey frock-coat and top hat, carnation in button-hole and, as always, a most captivating smile. But the barmaid was no novice in such scenes and immediately turned the attention of all the room on poor Arthur by saying, 'Oh no, Sir, it's you.'

Whether the proprietress of the County Hotel in Salisbury was as experienced as the barmaid, or whether the best man's telegram had been fuller than necessary (as we suspected), or whether our own faces gave us away, we couldn't tell, but we were received with smiling *empressement*. We appeared to be the only guests, and had the full attention of the staff. After dinner we went to unpack what little luggage we had brought. Mine was all contained in a Japanese basket supported by a strap. I made a little show by spreading out my brilliant dressing-gown and a lovely embroidered night-dress marked 'Mary Vivian', for it had been worked by my mother for her own trousseau. Meanwhile I was aware of Arthur tossing out the contents of his gladstone bag with muttered imprecations. Shaving things, socks, ties, and law papers lay about the room. After a final savage dive into the bag he burst out, 'What d'you think I've done? I've been and forgotten to put in my night-shirt!' An impasse if ever there was. We could do without most things, but the wedding-garment of a nightshirt did seem to come under the head of iron necessities. We rejected almost at once the idea of borrowing one in the hotel, for there was no *maitre* in the place. 'Let's go out and buy one,' said I, 'it's still light, and some shop is bound to be open.'

So off we started. Saturday evening in a country town seems to be the same everywhere. Streets congested with idlers. All the respectable shops were shut in the better parts, so we made our way towards the market-place, where the humbler members of the populace were driving bargains over stalls or in nondescript small shops. One of these was larger than the rest, a kind of universal provider, with a very low

ceiling from which was festooned every type of garment for the million. While Arthur was short-sightedly peering about I descried a flannelette nightshirt of fierce pink, reduced from two and eleven in black figures to one and eleven in red. When the man pulled it down from its perch we found it even worse to touch than to sight. 'Never mind,' said Arthur, as it was wrapped up, 'it might possibly have been worse; anyhow 'tis enough, 'twill serve.' When we got outside the shop he added, 'Let's get back quick to the hotel with it, lest some accident befall us by the way. We don't want to be found dead with it.' So we did, only to find later that it had been opened out by the chamber-maid and ostentatiously placed beside my dream of old embroidery.

Down we went into the town again, where last shoppings had now given way to sheer loafing and merriment, just suiting our mood. An old fellow with a kind of fiddle was actually playing 'Land of my Fathers', was able to reply when Arthur hailed him in Welsh, and was delighted with the largesse he received. This reminded Arthur of an incident that he had enjoyed a year or two before. He was walking in a street of Cardiff with a reverend old professor of the university, when they came across a man playing the fiddle vilely. Arthur asked him to lend the fiddle a minute, and taking it struck up a lively Welsh jig. Clients rolled up from surrounding streets, and the man's hat overflowed with coppers. Arthur was quite pleased at the result of his performance, but on looking round he discovered that he was not the main attraction. The old professor had picked up his coat-tails and was dancing in the roadway. He said he hadn't enjoyed himself so much since he was a boy.

It had been a cloudlessly sunny day, and now the moon had risen; it was nearly, but not quite, at its full. Nature does sometimes appear to reflect and enhance our own emotions. The cathedral drew us like a magnet. Surely there are few spots on earth to surpass in beauty that grassy Close, surrounded by dignified old houses, and in the midst the most graceful of spires to dominate the country round. We were

almost frightened by our complete happiness. 'The worst of it is,' said Arthur, 'that one of us is sure to go before the other.' Then I told him how mother had asked me once: 'Which would you rather, that Arthur should die first or yourself?' and when I said at once 'Myself,' she replied, 'Well, then, you don't love him enough yet.'

## XI

### *Ordinary Struggles*

#### § 1

**M**OST newly married women have the same difficulties to meet: servants or the lack of them; finding good provision shops; keeping expenditure down; making the daily routine run smoothly in the new surroundings. I had my share of all these, and made a fair crop of mistakes.

We returned from Salisbury on the Monday afternoon, and spent the rest of the day in pottering about the flat, putting up pictures, sitting on packing-cases, and revelling in the bare fact of having a home of our own. For supper we went out to a little restaurant. Miss Rogers's present had been a large lamp, and fortunately I had laid in a supply of oil; it was therefore possible for Arthur to sit up and have a last go at his brief for the next day. So it was not till the following morning that my troubles began.

There was no gas in the flat (nor ever was for the seven years we lived in it). Now I had been accustomed to do marvels on the little gas-ring in the Ladies' Chambers—cook porridge, fry bacon, scramble eggs, and even make a stew. And here I was faced with a huge iron range for my first attempt at a breakfast. Disraeli said that there were three things a man should never grumble at because they were unalterable—the weather, his wife, and the kitchen range. But I think he would have let loose a few expressions if he had been in my shoes. I had got up early, lit the fire, filled the kettle, arrayed slices of bacon in the pan, only to be met by smoke billowing forth at me from my 'fire'. In despair I called out to Arthur for help. He just shoved a damper or two about, and that impish range, seeing a man on the job, gave up its tricks and blazed up brightly. I felt that it was like the nursery rhyme 'stick won't beat dog':



everything began to hum—kettle began to sing, bacon began to frizzle, cloth was laid, and, best of all, Arthur had been got out of bed in good time.

As soon as he had started for the Temple I was busy enough. Most of my time was spent in unpacking cases, pushing things into place, and tidying away the oceans of packing-paper and straw that surged around. I couldn't make a bonfire, and I didn't dare to irritate my range. I thought of the story, that puzzled me as a child, of the old woman whose square house became round; the explanation being that she thrust everything into the corners. Then there was the servant's room to get ready, for she was to come on the following day. I had a rooted idea that a servant's bedroom must have pink chintz covered with muslin round her table. With some trouble I had managed to buy these things beforehand; and now I had but to nail them on to a little table, make up her trestle bed, and lay out her caps and aprons.

A friend had recommended to me a girl of eighteen, from East Dereham, in Norfolk, and I had made arrangements to meet her at the terminus on the following afternoon. I found Emma a fresh-faced, cheerful country girl. She had never before left her village, and told me that she had liked the journey, but had been dreadfully afraid, as the train rushed through several stations, that it wouldn't stop at London. The streets made no impression on her as we drove out to Ladbroke Grove, but she was astonished at the seventy steps that led up to our front door, and quite alarmed at her first venture forth alone: 'I didn't know where that road was going to, mum.' On her second venture she came rushing up the stairs again in great distress: 'I met a funeral, mum. Oh, I couldn't have went. Down hoom it means a death in the family.' As there was a cemetery at the end of the road, I had to kill this superstition at once.

Emma's turns of speech fascinated me, especially the Norfolk idioms. One neat phrase was an absolute 'do', equivalent to the clumsy 'if it should happen'. Thus she would say, 'I hope it won't rain, do we can't go'. She used the word 'deen' for any

small quantity, but always in the negative: 'There's not a deen of sugar left'—'We've not heard a deen of the postman.' She sang, more or less all day long, odd snatches of hymns and popular songs. I was besought at all hours to count my blessings, name them one by one, and told that I should be surprised at what the Lord had done—a bit irritating when the milk had just boiled over. An organ-grinder was one day playing a tune that I failed to recognize, and I asked her what it was. She at once diagnosed it as 'Say Olive Oil'. 'How queer,' said I. 'Why say olive oil? How does it go on?' 'Say olive oil, say not good-bye.' And then, of course, I gathered its meaning from the context. Sometimes of an evening, when Arthur was at work, the singing was trying. 'I shall have to stop it,' said I; but Arthur wouldn't allow that. 'Let her sing while she can,' said he, 'the time may come when she has no heart for it.'

Emma was a treasure. She not only knew how to work, but knew what to work at—a still more valuable asset. For I was ignorant in this line. I had vague ideas that servants were busy all the time, but what they were busy at was a mystery. Emma had a special day for 'turning out' each room, always cleaned the silver on Friday, and devoted Saturday to the kitchen. As for washing, I wished she had kept a special day for that, but she had a penchant for washing, and would wash at all hours. Things that seemed to be spotless would go into the tub if I turned my back. When I protested that the poor towels and pillow-cases were getting done to death by this ruthless washing, she laughed and said 'That's just what father says, because down hoom mother is always scrubbing. "If the landlord only knew it," he says, "he'd put five pounds on to the rent for what you take out of the house by for everlasting cleaning it."' I could see that Emma liked me to go out, so that she could get on with her work faster, and surprise me with her results on my return.

I had to leave her alone nearly every morning while I went out to do the shopping. Bessie of Guernsey, of mature experience, had advised me to get everything at Whiteley's.

'You've only got to walk into the shop, order what you want in the different departments, and you find everything delivered at your door.' She was right, but I soon found that this easy way of buying had to be paid for by too high prices, so I determined to explore the neighbourhood, buy what I wanted, and bring it home myself. There were actually some shops on the ground floor of our flat, but not of the right kind. One was a tailor's. But I never saw any symptom of tailoring going on, nor any customer going in. The shop row was one of those in London that seem doomed to failure for no assignable reason. One day Arthur found to his amusement, scrawled in chalk on the pavement, the words 'Lord have mercy upon us'. This was not intentional sarcasm about the shops, but was probably the work of a pious old fellow who used to stride to and fro in Notting Hill and say urgently into one's ear as he passed, 'Do you love Jesus?' I used to answer 'Yes, indeed' to cheer him, for I fear he suffered much from small boys.

One fortunate morning I found, quite a short distance away, another of London's oddities. It was a complete contrast to our row of respectable shops—no outward attractions and yet enjoying the liveliest trade. In an old narrow winding lane, once no doubt a medieval thoroughfare, I found shops and stalls catering for those who have no money to waste and mean to get the utmost value for their outlay. They were not to be put off with stale vegetables or doubtful fish—such as I had experienced in the 'better-class' shops. I expect Bessie would have been shocked to see me coming home with my booty, for, of course, nothing was 'sent up'.

One shop, a greengrocer's, was the most satisfactory place of business I have ever been in, for there seemed to be no waste at all. It had been so successful that it had spread out into an enormous rambling store, and was always crowded with customers. The premises were allowed to remain ramshackle, no books were kept, no credit given, and the whole energy of the staff was devoted to getting the best they could every morning from Covent Garden and selling it quickly at a small

profit. By the 'best' I don't mean exotic fruits or anything out of season, but great piles of all that was 'in'—such as fresh strawberries, raspberries, currants—served out to the first comers (often little children) with good humour, homely manners, and very little wrapping up. Once I had already filled my shopping basket when I spied some sprouts and begged for a paper bag to put them in. 'Not for greens, my dear,' was the inexorable reply.

Meat I preferred to buy in another road, for the joints and pieces in the lane were turned over by prospective buyers. But fish was always safe. 'Are those soft roes?' I asked a huge woman who was presiding over a mountain of fresh herrings. 'I won't deceive you, my dear,' said she, 'they ain't.' How she managed to have such an intimate knowledge of every one of them was a puzzle to me, till Arthur explained that the soft roes are sorted out at Billingsgate, as being more valuable. He took great interest in the scraps of experience that I related to him in the evenings. They added to his apparently inexhaustible store of odd information—mostly derived first-hand from contact with the people he met, from judges to tramps. On a railway journey once with a commercial traveller, he entered into the difficulties, disappointments and even tricks of the trade, to such an extent that the man couldn't believe that he hadn't done some 'travelling' himself. This propensity to talk to every one came from sheer interest in life, with no ulterior motive, but, of course, his uncanny acquaintance with a man's daily routine was of great use when a witness was cross-examined, for the unexpected knowledge would surprise a liar into truth.

One incident of my shopping specially amused us both. After buying some candles one day in a tiny 'Italian warehouse' in the lane, I noticed that the woman was doing up the parcel very slowly, and stopping to look up at me woefully. 'Anything the matter?' I asked. 'Oh, do tell me,' said she, 'what to have for dinner; my husband's a bit hard to please.' 'How about a steak?' 'Has that nearly every day; wants a bit o' change.' 'A haddock?' 'Had that yesterday.' I launched out,

‘Why not give him a mixed grill?’ ‘What’s that?’ ‘You can change it about as you can get the things; but you have a nice slice of fried bread, and arrange on it and round it a couple of sausages or kidneys or a cutlet, and then add bacon and a bit of liver, tomatoes, mushrooms. . . .’ As I grew lyrical her face brightened and her thanks were so profuse that I felt like the man who helped Simon Lee.

Shopping in the lane brought my accounts down nicely, and I kept them rigidly, noting every item, such as ‘parsley— $\frac{1}{2}d.$ ’ Everything was paid for by me except coal and Emma’s wages, and I received thirty shillings from Arthur each Monday morning, frequently having four or five shillings in hand against the unforeseens of the following week. Clothes were little worry to either of us, for thanks to Mary Wood I had stocked myself well, and Arthur’s method of replenishing his wardrobe was simplicity itself. Ever since his Cambridge days Mr. Neal, of Trumpington Street, had supplied him with clothes, and as far as I could judge Arthur paid him for this marvellous service £5 a year, at the same time always owing him about £20. As I had a horror of the smallest debt I suggested that Arthur should pay off the whole. ‘Pay it all!’ he exclaimed, ‘What a blow it would be to Neal! He would think that I was dissatisfied and finished with him.’ So I hoped it would never be paid, for apparently nothing but the death of a customer would excuse such an act of discourtesy. A man’s method of choosing new clothes seemed to me equally strange, and its simplicity charmed me. Mr. Neal paid periodical visits to his customers in London, told them what they wanted, and took orders; in due course the parcel arrived at home. ‘Saw old Neal in the Temple to-day,’ Arthur would tell me, ‘and he says I want a new overcoat as well as a new suit. I suppose I do. He showed me a lot of patterns for the trousers—they seem to be the only things one can have any choice about. But these were so much alike that I asked him why he didn’t break out into something fresh. “The taste of the public,” said he solemnly, “appears, Sir, to have settled in stripes.”’ This kindly man was more of a friend than a tailor to both of us,

taking genuine interest in the joys and sorrows of our life; and now his sons clothe my son Arthur in the same delightful way.

## § 2

Cooking was the main field of my ambition, and it took me hours of thought and many failures before I managed to do it with half my mind, as one ought to do. Cookery books were little use for a beginner, never saying how to do the common things, such as making gravy out of nothing. Two guiding stars were the outcome of my own experience: (1) Never to keep Arthur waiting for his meal. (2) Never to give him cold mutton.

Gazing dubiously one day at a saucepan of stew, I heard Emma's voice behind me, 'The Consul's brow was sad and the Consul's speech was low.' 'Good gracious!' said I, 'where did you pick up that?' 'Oh, we learnt that at school.' She was eager to learn anything she could, and one day when I had to go some distance to pay a call she begged me to let her manage the whole dinner—joint and vegetables, pudding and all. I risked it, and at her urgent request didn't return till just upon dinner-time. It was a complete success, and I shall never forget her look of pleasure when Arthur proclaimed it 'top-hole'.

Many a bit of country lore I picked up from Emma. One of these described the ideal wife:

*She could make, she could bake,  
She could brew, she could sew,  
And found time to teach her three sons to say 'No'.*

Brewing was out of my scope, and so were the three sons at the moment, but what about baking? I determined to have a try at this. My cookery book was discouraging, making it seem that to cook a loaf of bread was like carrying out some chemical experiment, referring to weights (I possessed no scales) and even to Fahrenheit. So I harked back to my recollections of having seen it done scores of times in Cornwall

and Wales, without having paid attention to the actual details. I remembered how often mother used to send me out when I was a little child to buy a pennyworth of yeast at the baker's, for her saffron cake. So I sent Emma out on a like errand. She had never made bread, but recalled a saying of her mother's — 'All that bread wants is time and warmth.' I started in with some flour; the yeast and the oven did their work; and with beginner's luck I produced some lovely rolls. These were placed on the table within reach of Arthur at dinner.

'Good roll, this,' said he, trying one. 'Where do you get them? A new baker?'

'Yes,' said I, as casually as my bursting pride would allow me, 'I made them myself.'

'Do you mean to tell me,' he exclaimed, 'that this thing is only flour and water?' Holding it up in amazement, he added, 'Then what on earth do they do to the bread in the shops?'

To this day I have never gone back from that exciting discovery, and except in emergencies have produced my own bread for over thirty years, the family strongly objecting to 'boughten' bread. People dislike the idea of trying this for themselves because of the 'time it takes'. The bread certainly wants time, I assure them, but not *their* time; it doesn't ask to be watched, and can be trusted alone in the house; the actual labour in making a batch takes about six minutes from start to finish. But they shake their heads in a melancholy way as they ask for another slice.

An old friend of Arthur's, Dr. Daniell, learned in physics and indeed everything else, was quite excited about the bread, wanted to hear exactly how I made it, but was shocked at my having to send out for the yeast. 'Why not save time and trouble, not to mention expense, by making your own?' he urged. So, following his directions, I cooked two pounds of potatoes, mashed them up in water and all, poured them into an earthenware pan, and when they were cooled to about blood heat, placed a slice of toast to float on the top with an ounce of yeast spread on it. (After all, one had to *begin* with a bit

of yeast.) After some hours the whole painful became yeast, and we bottled it and put it away, using from it as required. Economical, labour-saving, efficient. But Arthur said it must stop, because his nerves couldn't stand it. It was frequently his custom of an evening to be sitting up late for work after I had gone to bed, Emma had ceased singing, and all was quiet. Once, at about midnight, he was startled by what he called an infernal explosion. One of the bottles of yeast had burst its cork forth. So we returned to the pennyworth of yeast at the baker's. Another pestiferous visitor, a 'notable housewife', informed me in a superior way that no bread was really home-made unless brewers' barm was used. So I bought a little covered tin can (such as navvies use for their tea) and made expeditions to a brewery for a pennyworth of barm. We could perceive no difference in the quality of the bread, and I found the barm so temperamental and uncertain in its raising power that I soon returned to the original yeast, of which a pennyworth lasted for three bakings.

I wrote continually to my beloved aunt Tony in Cornwall, telling her of my ups and downs, and getting hints from her. She sent directions for stewing a rabbit, and for making a pork-pie, but she considered that I should never be able to achieve the latter. This put me on my mettle, and I made some fine ones; and when she sent me some of her own butter I was able to display an all home-made breakfast.

### § 3

In addition to the fun of shopping and attempts at new cookery, I had people to see me. Not the perfunctory kind, for it was pleasant to reflect that they would never mount those seventy steps in the hope of finding no one at home. There was always plenty to talk about, for if conversation flagged we had one exhibit of constant interest. Our windows looked right down into the grounds of a convent. I forget the name of the sisterhood, but it was a very close one. The nuns never left the premises, ate no meat, and grew all their own vege-



tables. We had this information from our doctor, who also attended them; he told us that some one had mistakenly sent them a turkey one Christmas, and that they had given it to him. We used to watch them digging and hoeing and watering, and often leaping about over the beds from sheer *joie de vivre*. Then there were frequent processions with chanting, and on special days coloured banners, figures, and crosses were carried round the paths.

One of my earliest visitors must have thought me very queer, for my mind was quite off the subject in hand. I could by no effort remember what her wedding present to me had been; and I felt sure she was expecting some grateful reference to it. It wouldn't do to say merely, 'How good of you to send me that nice present—so useful!' when she was probably sitting on it, eating off it, or gazing at it. No sooner had I seen her off and returned into the room than the little clock on the mantelpiece winked at me and said 'It's me'. For years I've puzzled over the fact that trying to remember a thing puts a stopper on one's brain, and can only conclude that the fussy struggle throws a sabot into the machinery. Perhaps at this time my exuberant happiness affected my memory, for the first time I repaid one of these early calls I couldn't think what my name was when the servant asked me.

The wife of a doctor (not our own) during the course of her visit told me how she suffered from young women patients who adored her husband and were always haunting the surgery with some feigned complaint. 'Thank goodness,' I replied, 'there's no trouble of that kind with a barrister.' 'Ah, Mrs. Hughes,' said she, shaking her head sadly, 'you *little* know what goes on in the Temple!'

Far more pleasant than such callers as this was the dropping in of kindred spirits—our brothers and their wives, our Celtic cousins, old friends on their visits to London, and the ever-welcome Mary Wood and her sisters. M'Jane and Yetta even mounted those stairs to give me encouragement and advice, to bring me some extra comforts or labour-saving gadgets, rearrange the furniture, and instruct Emma how to be more

correct in her way of bringing in the tea. Sometimes I found these alterations and suggestions a bit trying, but Arthur said, 'Never refuse advice. Whether you follow it or not is another matter.'

Most of my old companions were content to be amazed and amused that my *ménage* worked at all, and we exchanged notes on our experiences. My Cornish cousin Lucy, whose varied homes had included both Norway and China, compared my conditions very favourably with her own newly married life.

'We started from Cornwall with some nice new furniture, but our route lay through the Straits Settlements, and when we arrived up-country and examined our belongings we found that the glue had melted, and packing-cases, chairs, tables, chests of drawers—everything was reduced to a mass of confused sticks.'

Her sister, Christina, also came to see me. She, too, had travelled in strange regions. Her stories tended to be more picturesque than Lucy's, but I like to think that this one was true. She wanted to show her Chinese servant how to answer the door and announce a visitor properly. After instructing him verbally, she went outside to rehearse the whole affair by pretending to be a visitor. She knocked, Wong opened the door, showed her in and announced her perfectly. It was her afternoon 'at home', and she then sat down to await any callers, feeling satisfied that Wong would do his duty properly. Presently there was a knock, but it was followed by no movement on Wong's part. The knock was repeated. Still dead silence within. A third knock roused her to anger and she went to the door herself to find Wong outside, grinning. 'You foolie me,' said he, 'me foolie you.'

Another cousin was the mother of several boys, and told me that once during a visitor's call there came through the open window an agonized cry as of a child being torn by machinery. Rushing out she found her son laughing with delight at the success of the noise that some Cornish imp had taught him. She said she wished she were able to achieve the

nonchalance of a certain mother who exclaimed when she heard a blood-curdling yell, 'Thank heaven, one of my sons is still alive!'

My late students of Bedford College who managed to come over to see me were pleased, I'm sure, to be able to turn the tables on me by giving me instruction in domestic work. They knew much more about sewing than I did, and taught me how to cut out, how to place a pocket, put in sleeves, and other mysteries. As for knitting, I could soon turn a heel, and was able to make quite elaborate patterns in fleecy white wool. Arthur assured me that he could knit too, but didn't hold with patterns. One evening when I was making a little woolly jacket of basket-pattern I left it to go into the kitchen. On my taking it up again I found that Arthur had done a row to help me. 'But it's all wrong for the pattern,' I cried. 'No matter,' said he, 'you'll find such quaint aberrations all the thing in really artistic work. Look at the Persian rug. And the small wearer won't notice the oddity, you'll see.' So I kept it. Arthur had no knowledge of domestic affairs, much to my contentment, but if anything went wrong he was on the spot at once with precise efficiency. (How do men do it?) He used to assert that he could make an omelet, had indeed done so once in his bachelor rooms. But I didn't test him, and no crisis ever befell us in which an omelet was called for.

At rare intervals we invited a choice friend or two to come and have dinner with us. Our guests would enter into the spirit of the thing and we all enjoyed ourselves—Emma not least, for she came out strong with her waiting. But once the friends were a little too choice. Dr. Daniell was a man of unlimited anecdote, and an accomplished raconteur. So we selected two other men we knew who were also gifted (or cursed) in this way, hoping that the conversation would be tip-top. Each indeed arrived all primed with his best stories, but, as we ought to have foreseen, he only listened to the others in order to chip in with his own. As for Dr. Daniell, he appeared to know every single story, and couldn't disguise his knowledge of it. After one contribution he said,

'Ah, yes, that is the Norfolk variant.' But nothing deterred them from unloading all their goods, and it was a late hour when they finally tore themselves away. Then, indeed, Arthur and I had the first honest laugh of the evening, as we vowed that we didn't want to hear another funny story ever.

Occasionally Arthur would announce, 'Shan't be home to dinner to-morrow; Alfred's in town.' At other times the reason would be, 'Llewelyn is coming up to see how the bishops are behaving themselves at some blooming meeting.' Or, 'It's call night at the Inn.' Or, 'It's Grand night.' Or, 'The Bacon Club are having their annual dinner.' I used to get much vicarious pleasure from hearing what they had had for dinner, especially after a Grand night at the Inn. I also got much amusement from Arthur's report—always disparaging.

'Not much of a dinner, just mutton, you know.'

'Saddle?'

'Yes, it was saddle, but the jelly wasn't up to much.'

'Asparagus?'

'M-yes, but not enough of it.'

'Ices?'

'M-yes, but I've tasted better, and anyhow I much prefer the dinner I get at home.'

His friends used to tease him about his frequent excuse for declining an invitation—'Sorry, but I've got to get home.' He told me that one of them had accused him of being hen-pecked. 'I always go one better when people get funny, so I told him that it was not much use being married unless one was henpecked a bit.'

On one most memorable day I went to a banquet with him. It was some very specially red-letter day in the life of the Society of Cymmrodorion, of which Arthur was a zealous member. Eminent Welshmen from all parts and in all walks of life were gathered in the big hall of the Holborn Restaurant, to rejoice together in belonging to a nation that had produced so many heroes and poets. Of the long dinner I remember only the oysters—things I had heard of long enough, but never met before. Of the lovely Welsh singing that accompanied

the feast I welcomed my favourite 'Suo gân'. The speeches were a delightful mixture of learning and wit. Of course the toast-master was a new experience for me, and his solemnity and pomposity amazed me. The chief guests of the evening for whom he prayed silence were Balfour and Lloyd George. We guessed that these two had never before sat down to a meal together, and the mere fact of seeing them in such close amity was entertainment enough—as though one should see a lion and a lamb sharing a drink out of a trough. There was no doubt as to which was the lion and which the lamb. Balfour was there because he was steeped in Welsh literature, and Lloyd George was there because he was Welsh (although Arthur pretended to doubt even this!) It was the time when these two were going for one another hammer and tongs almost daily in Parliament. At the dinner their speeches were decorated by gracious bowings to one another and smiling allusions to Another Place. Cleverly as Lloyd George could score off Balfour in debate, he was no match for him in expatiating on the beauties of Welsh poetry, in quoting it, comparing with Homer, and suchlike subtleties, and as soon as decency permitted he left the table on account of 'pressing duties in the House'.

For me the best bit of the evening was the period before the dinner, an ever memorable *quart d'heure*, when all the good and great were mingling and chatting. I could hardly believe that I was within touch of Balfour. Among the cheery throng was one of the most famous judges of the day, a Welshman, and Arthur brought me along for a few words with him. I was too nervous to take in the nice things he was saying to me, but noticed that they included a compliment on Arthur's advocacy. However, I managed to say, 'I have seen you on the Bench.' 'Then I do trust,' said he, in anxious tones, 'that I was behaving myself properly.'

#### § 4

The evening was the part of the day that made the rest of it worth while. After dinner we began it with a game of chess,

no matter how pressing any work might be. Arthur said it was good for his brain to think of something different, though if he lost he would say, 'My mind was in the Temple.' Now and again, in small ways, I was able to help with his work, usually by dictating passages from a fat law book for some bit of conveyancing. I soon came to be able to read the strange abbreviations which at first made the pages look like a foreign language.

'Conveyancing seems a dull job,' I remarked, after one of these spells of dictation.

'Yes,' said Arthur, 'you just have to peg away at it. It's like your hemming round the bottom of a skirt—you have to be careful, however monotonous it is, for if you slip just one stitch you may get tripped up.'

'A lot of it seems mere verbiage to me,' said I.

'That's what most people think, and that's why we toast the man who makes his own will. He thinks he can put his intentions so simply that he doesn't need a lawyer, and we get a harvest of litigation to clear up his mess. No, believe me, every word in a legal document is necessary. If you leave out some absurdly remote contingency in a will, that contingency will go and happen.'

Arthur's casual manner with a paper marked URGENT surprised me. 'Oh, there's no hurry about that; they usually mark things urgent; it doesn't mean anything.' 'What do they put, then,' I asked, 'if it really is urgent?' as I raked my mind for a stronger word. 'Tuesday morning, 10.15,' said Arthur. 'Quite simple.'

'What do you do,' I asked, 'when they're in a hurry for an opinion, and you want more time to make up your mind?'

'I ask for more information on some point, and while they are getting it I can look up other cases, and so on.'

What I enjoyed most was the discussion of some impending case. The point of view of Arthur's client always seemed to me unassailable, until he trained me to throw all my weight into the enemy's camp. 'It's not a bit of use to agree with me,' he would say. 'I know *my* good points. What I want you to

see is the horribly good point of the other chap, or some horribly weak one of mine.' He told me how many a case was ruined by the failure of a client to confess some silly thing he (or usually she) had done. This, of course, would come out in cross-examination, and no defence would be ready. People seemed to imagine that anything written in haste would be destroyed in haste. 'Remember this, Molly, never write a letter to any one when you are angry, or if you have any difference with them at all. If write you must, always have legal advice.'

There was hardly a case that didn't widen our knowledge of things in general. For instance, there was one about brandy, in the course of which even Arthur's hair was raised at the revelations as to its manufacture. Certain 'brandy' was sold without any ingredient that one would expect. Arthur surmised that if grapes had ever entered it at all, they must have gone through on stilts. Our conclusion was that the emergency brandy we always kept in the cupboard must be the best.

One case was almost amusing from the mere fact of its being completely hopeless. 'Why didn't you settle it out of court?' said I. 'Of course I tried to, but the other side know they are in the right and they are out for blood.' 'Well, what can you do then?' 'Oh I'll give the defendant a run for his money. I'll tousele them up and down a bit.' It was in some County Court at a little distance, and I was surprised to see Arthur back earlier than usual, and brimming with quiet joy. He related with glee how he had actually 'pulled off' the case. Everything was in trim, many witnesses for the plaintiff had been drawn from far, the stage was all set, and no possible loophole for the defendant, when Arthur popped up and submitted quite quietly that, owing to the precise locality of the accident, the court was the wrong one for the case and had no jurisdiction in the matter. The whole thing collapsed at once, and the game was not worth the candle for its renewal elsewhere. 'And serve the man right,' said Arthur, 'for not being willing to settle.'

This matter of settling out of court meant a severe mental

and moral struggle sometimes. Arthur was for the plaintiff once in a case against a very well-known public man, who had treated an attractive girl in a shabby and dishonourable way. Although it was ostensibly a question of payment for service rendered, the man had written such a lot of ludicrous letters that Arthur knew that he could make London laugh by quoting from them, and that it would easily be a *cause célèbre*, and the making of him. We both got excited over it. But one evening Arthur returned in a dejected state. 'I'm afraid we shall have to settle,' said he. 'I can't entirely trust my client to have told me all that she herself said or wrote, and they are offering a tremendous sum to settle.' 'Yes, but', I protested, 'if they are offering such a lot it means they are in a big funk. Can't you risk it? It would mean such a chance for you.' Arthur's anger with me for suggesting that he should put his own interest before his client's was for me a means of measuring the temptation he had overcome.

Criminal work he determined not to touch, and this decision was final after his one experience of it. A fellow barrister was in a hole with clashing cases, and asked him to take on the defence of a girl charged with child murder. How he slaved one night over a book on medical law! He had been to see the poor girl in prison, and the whole thing had been too much for his feelings, and there were actual tears of indignation in his eyes as he told me about it. By throwing doubt on the evidence of the prosecution as to the state of the child's lungs, and showing that there was a possibility that there had never been full life at all, he managed to get the woman discharged. 'No doubt,' he said to me when he came home, 'they were glad enough to be given any excuse to clear her. But it's no wonder that the men who take up criminal work take to drink. I hear that they all do. No more of it for me.'

Work was always uncertain; frequently two cases would be on at once, and then perhaps a fortnight would go by with nothing on at all. I was told in later years, when things were rather more steady, that early disappointments had been many and bitter; but these had been hidden from me, while good



news was told at once. In fact my only grievance against Arthur was that he protected me from the unpleasant rather too much. I came from an enduring stock, and would have preferred to share the rubs as well as the boons. One rub, however, he felt obliged to disclose. We had been having a specially pleasant little dinner party at home, with Mary Wood's eldest sister and her husband. They were both artists and travellers and provided delightful conversation till late in the evening. When they had gone Arthur said, 'I've got something rather dreadful to tell you . . . I had my pass-book in to-day from the bank, and what do you think we are reduced to?' 'Tuppence ha'penny?' said I. 'Well, not much more, only just over £7.' 'It might be worse,' said I, 'anyhow we aren't in debt for anything, and some fat work is bound to come in soon.' And so it did, for not long after this he came home with the news that a brief had come in marked 100 guineas.

I suppose it is the same in every calling, that a man suffers almost as much from its petty annoyances as from the uncertainty of the income it brings him. Arthur's Leaders not only tortured him by sometimes spoiling a good point, but would often expect the Junior to do all the preliminary work without contributing much themselves. 'Look at this so-called opinion he has sent in,' said Arthur, in exasperation, one day. 'I should think he did it while he was shaving.'

In his early days at the Bar Arthur had suffered much from unprincipled solicitors, who got advice and hours of work without intending ever to pay for it, knowing that a barrister has no redress for this kind of theft. Although he had many staunch friends among solicitors, such knavish treatment soured him towards them as a class, and yet he was obliged to 'nurse' them. He told me an absurd story of a barrister friend of his who invited a solicitor to lunch and plied him with food and wine, and was not a little surprised to find his guest anxious to pay for the whole thing. It was not until the coffee and cigar stage that they discovered that both of them were barristers under the delusion that the other was a solicitor.

The patronizing manner of some of the solicitors was their most annoying feature, and the fiery-tempered Arthur needed all his self-restraint to keep decently polite. One night I was awakened by a violent kick. 'Hold!' cried I, 'what now?' 'Sorry, darling,' came a sleepy voice, 'I thought you were a solicitor.'

## XII

### *Bronwen*

#### § 1

WHEN life hums happily along one day seems much the same as another, in retrospect. But an unusual event revivifies the preceding incidents, and the trivialities just before the greatest day of my life stand out as though they had happened yesterday.

One morning in the late spring of '98 I went out to do my usual shopping in Portobello Lane, and captured a fine piece of cod for the evening meal, and some shrimps to make a sauce for it. Then I bought oranges at the famous greengrocer's, where I had on one occasion bought eight good oranges for a penny. The pudding was to be Arthur's favourite, a marmalade one, called Sir William Watkins. This was always a bit of a gamble, but to my relief it turned out finely, and as it was backed up by cheese straws and coffee, all went well. Then we settled down to our usual game of chess. Annoyed at being beaten, though it was my usual fate, I demanded another game and a chance for revenge. No good. So then Arthur settled to his law work and I to my 'parlour work'. We gave this name to any kind of sewing, from a story of my mother's. She had invited an old servant to come to tea, and the reply was: 'Thank you, mum, I'll come when I have a bit of parlour work that I can bring.' When she came she brought a pair of her husband's trousers to mend.

I felt a bit tired and went to bed early, and about half an hour later I tapped on the wall to summon Arthur for a consultation, as I called it. He thought he had better have a second opinion, and ask the doctor to look in. Since the latter lived quite close he was soon on the spot, and dispatched Arthur to fetch the nurse (who, of course, like all nurses, was at another case in some remote suburb). Before starting Arthur

called up Emma and told her to light the fire in the special room prepared for the emergency, to get me into it, and to sit with me until he returned with the nurse. Emma was as excited as myself, delighted to speculate with me on all the possibilities ahead, as we chatted away the time in the firelight. Most reluctantly she returned to bed when the nurse arrived, at two o'clock.

Even at that forbidding hour the energetic little nurse felt that she ought to be doing something or asking where something was. I understood the expression 'snatches of sleep', for all I got that night was really snatched from a running fire of questions, washings, combings, and straightenings. A spread of small bustling surrounded the nurse like an aura. All this was at least cheerful and even funny, but what I found hard to bear was being kissed in a repetitive way, like a duck at its dinner.

At this point, like the Baker, 'I skip forty years'. It seemed like years, for it was not till eleven o'clock next morning that my first-born appeared. The doctor was very kind; he guessed that I had never had such a long and hard spell of work before. 'Now you understand,' said he, 'the full force of the word "labour".' At this I told him of a German governess I knew who greatly admired the Litany. 'It prays for every one, even the poor governess.' I was puzzled, and asked which petition she meant. 'For all women labouring of child,' she replied. (By the way, it was this linguist who thought that 'Keep to the left' on our street shelters meant 'Asylum for those left behind'.)

Perhaps there may be some greater peaks of happiness for mortals, but I have not heard of anything that could come up to the joy of that morning. It compensated to overflowing for all the trials and difficulties of our ten long years of waiting. And it was a girl that Arthur had been secretly longing for. How swiftly and quietly he came along the passage, afraid to shout or laugh or touch or come too near . . . putting all his energy into rubbing his hands and gazing at this marvel. The babies I had so far seen were little wrinkled, crumpled things, dull red all over, but this was a lovely creature,

pink and white, and smooth as a shell. I remembered how my mother used to describe her astonishment at the beautiful face of her second boy—quite unlike the others of us; so I concluded that this vision might actually be my own child and not some heavenly changeling.

Arthur had much difficulty in tearing himself away to the Temple, but got home 'brave and early', as the Cornish say. 'We had a celebration,' said he, 'champagne at the "Cock"; and I've been sending telegrams like mad. And I've put a notice in *The Times*. Atkin advised this, for he says you get more than the money's-worth in gifts from advertising firms.'

And so we did. To Emma's delight every post for several days brought some exotic soap or baby-powder, some patent food or delicate ointment, and a photographer sent us even a photograph of the notice in the paper.

Arthur was so wrapped up in his daughter that his friends in the Temple teased him a little, and accused him once (to his shameless delight) of carrying a bottle of milk in his brief-bag. 'Of course I do,' he replied, 'one mustn't be unprepared, one never knows, and I have a serious job on—I'm founding a dynasty.' One evening as he was brooding over his new possession he said, 'You know I shall be fined for this?' And he explained that when they were on circuit any man who had had a stroke of luck was always fined; there were other strange old customs—for instance, at dinner during his first circuit he was asked which he would have, Old Testament or New. Not knowing what it meant he said, 'Old', as it sounded more solid. And so it was, for he had to drink right off a tumblerful of port. The New would have been only claret. As for the impending fine, I suggested that he shouldn't mention his daughter at all. 'A sound piece of advice,' said he, and laughed.

It was a grand time for me. My room was gay with violets and daffodils, letters of congratulation poured upon me, as well as presents of food dainties, little garments, cot accessories, and so on. My brothers, Tom and Dym, were vociferous in their pleasure at my having achieved a 'lil maid' (to quote Tom's Cornish term of endearment). Neither Arthur nor I

had a sister, and my brothers' children were all boys, so that a girl in the family was something of an event. A letter that I valued very much came from Mrs. Ruck, of Pantlludw; after hearty congratulations she added: 'Ask Arthur to repeat to you a Welsh proverb which says, "It's wise in having children to have a girl first."' She ended with a strong wish to hear the new friend's name as soon as it was settled.

'Well, what about her name?' said Arthur as we read this, for we hadn't discussed the matter at all.

'She is Welsh,' said I, 'and there is no doubt what her name must be. She is Bronwen.'

'Do you really mean that?' exclaimed Arthur, glowing with pleasure. The name of his old home in Wales was Fronwen, which means 'the shining hill', and the corresponding name for a girl is Bronwen, which means 'the shining breast'. I felt sure, from the way he used to speak it, that this name made him love her still more.

Among my visitors Yetta was first on the scene, having started immediately on receipt of the telegram. She, too, was delighted at its being a girl, and I believe from the first moment looked upon the little mite as a future student of Bedford College. Yetta was none too satisfied with the nurse, and made some useful alterations in the room and the 'doings' generally. She was a clever nurse herself, leaping to any emergency; in fact she had wanted to take up nursing as a profession, but it had not been considered respectable! She took me for several drives in the Park, as soon as I could be persuaded that the nurse could look after baby in my absence.

Mary Wood was, of course, constantly in and out, providing much comic relief. I saved up for her the nuggets of wisdom that fell from the nurse's lips, as well as her tactful attempts to put me right in points of pronunciation. Thus, for instance, I had said that one of my presents was 'very research' and a few minutes later the word *recherché* was brought casually into the conversation. She was a kindly soul and spared herself no trouble, but oh how glad we were when her month was up, and we could again be by ourselves.

Emma had the country girl's usual wide experience of baby welfare, and was proud to give me the information I required. 'How often should we change her nightdress, Emma?' I asked. The reply was immediate and unequivocal—'Oh, a baby always looks to have a clean one twice a week.' She knew also the odd names for the odd garments that babies wore in that era—such as 'bellyband' (about a yard of flannel that was swathed round and round and safety-pinned on) and 'barra-coat' (a garment that I would as easily make as describe).

Naturally in the preceding months I had sought information right and left. My most promising source was Alfred's wife, who had not only a doctor for a husband, but also three children. She took the greatest interest, and loaded me with kindness, but in the matter of what to do about a baby she was, or pretended to be, a blank. 'When I was married,' said she, 'all I knew about a baby was that it had something out of a bottle, and I know little more now. I soon discovered, however, that they are always getting some little thing the matter with them, and then getting quite right again—all on their own. The great thing is that you mustn't fuss about them.' This seemed at the time to be too negative to be useful, but later on I found it by far the most useful bit of advice that I had.

Alfred himself was still more reticent. When Arthur applied to him for advice he said, 'Whatever you do, don't let Molly see a *book* on the subject. They're all useless, and for the most part harmful.' But in spite of this strong negative Arthur couldn't resist buying *Advice to a Wife*, which he found in a remote corner of a railway bookstall. It looked rather weary and second-hand, and if it hadn't been for Arthur's eagle eye for any kind of book it would probably soon have been scrapped. The author was a certain Pye Chevasse, who afforded us merriment if not profit. To him a lady was as delicate as a piece of Venetian glass. She was advised, in the circumstances, to have fresh air in her bedroom (obviously an extreme measure); should the open window be too severe, the door might be left open, and if she were nervous a little chain could be attached to it. Alcohol was not advisable, but she could take

with it, 'but nothing shall induce me to pick you up.' 'But,' said he to the audience, 'I picked him up.' 'Well, I've picked you up,' said he to the baby, 'but I'm blown if I walk about with you.' But he walked about with him. 'I am walking about with you, but I will *not* toss you up and down.' But he tossed him up and down. 'I don't so much mind a little walking and tossing, but nothing on earth shall make me sing to you.' But he sang to him.

All these visits were a great pleasure for me, but what Emma liked best was for us to have Bronwen all to ourselves. What with planning new clothes for her, cutting them out, and creating them, taking her for walks, arranging the cot, going through the ritual of the bath, and preparing dinner in time for Arthur's return, the days flew gaily by, and any little mishap was of no importance at all. One day I was certainly distressed to see my complete stew tilt over into the fire. While I stood looking in dismay at what could not be retrieved, I heard Emma's voice at my elbow, 'Never mind, think of your little Bronwen.' This was apropos of a story I had told her of a small boy who had been given a toy lion—a toy that he lived for. Soon afterwards he was taken to a children's party which had no attractions for him, and he sat gloomy in a corner. Some one looking at him noticed his face suddenly brighten and heard him say, 'I forgot my lion!'

The great moment of the day was seven o'clock, when Arthur was due to come home. There was no music in the world like the sound of his latch-key. His first words never varied when I went to greet him: 'How is she?' Not that there was ever anything the matter with her; but there was always some new accomplishment to relate—a smile, a palpable smile; what *looks* like a tooth coming; an attempt to pull herself up; an enlargement of the appetite; and, of course, an extraordinary intelligence, for which 'taking notice' was a feeble word.

On Saturday afternoons we hoped there would be no visitors or anything at all to disturb Arthur in his complete enjoyment of Bronwen's company. He had bought a kind



of weighing machine for recording her progress in pounds and ounces. For this ceremony she was put in one half of my Japanese basket, but it wobbled about so much that I placed no confidence in the weight that was registered. But my arms told me she was getting on.

Yes, Saturday afternoon was the great time for us all. After a short outing, Arthur would settle himself in his deep old basket chair and have Bronwen on his knee. I took my parlour-work and Emma made any excuse she could to hover in and out. Bronwen's idea of sport was to tug her father's moustache till he cried 'Ooh!' Then she took to giving a prophetic 'Ooh!' herself, just before a specially hard tug. Toys had been given her in plenty but she took to none of them, sometimes hurling them out of her pram or into her bath. What she liked best was to play with anything that we ourselves were using or wearing. I had brought from Switzerland a brooch with a tiny cow-bell attached, and this she loved to ring. Some optimist had given Arthur a sovereign-purse, which he wore on his watch-chain to inspire confidence; this she would contrive to squeeze into her mouth as she sat on his lap. One afternoon she had become excited with some of these games, and I heard Arthur say, 'Here, Emma, take her; there are ominous sounds.' Ever after that Emma used to refer delicately to 'omnibus sounds'. Sometimes Arthur would play a dance tune for her on his fiddle, while she would joggle up and down to it on my lap, and when it came to bed-time he would lull her to sleep with Gwynedd Gwyn. It had for long been his dream to have a daughter who should play the harp, and any pleasure she showed in sounds was a happy omen. Baby-talk he never used to her, but would chat freely to her of this and that, sometimes even appearing to be asking her opinion on some legal point. No doubt he interpreted her gay gurgles quite usefully. One night, in the small hours, she began crying for an extra meal, and continued her demands while I was getting it ready, drawing forth a sleepy protest from Arthur: 'Bronwen, your complaint is not based on the necessity of the situation.'

Days were full enough without the need, or desire, for outings of any kind; theatres, concerts, and picture galleries were things of the past for me; and as for Arthur, an occasional dinner in town was all that he indulged in. However, there was to be a great exception. On July 15th, '98, Gray's Inn was to give a ball, the only one (so far as I know) since the jubilee year of 1887. This one, I think, was to celebrate the jubilee of 1897. Arthur said that we must both go.

Gray's Inn had always held a peculiar fascination for me. Arthur had taken me to see the mellow old hall with its oak tables and famous portraits, and told me of the ceremony of the loving-cup on Grand Night, when they toasted 'the pious, glorious, and immortal memory of Good Queen Bess'. On one most memorable occasion, too, I had been permitted to see an actual letter written by Bacon. It was at the time when Arthur and I were greatly interested in the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy, so I looked up at the librarian and said, pointing to the letter, 'Was it this hand that wrote *Hamlet*?' 'That is as you like it,' was the smiling response. The beautiful garden had been another delight—the gateway, the cawing of rooks, the trees and lawns, and especially the old catalpa tree, that was said to have been brought as a sapling from America by Raleigh as a present to Bacon. 'Do you think he really brought it?' I asked Arthur. 'Well,' said Arthur, 'if he didn't he ought to have done.'

Prowling about the Inn like this was one thing, but a ball was quite another, and I immediately pleaded the excuse that I couldn't leave Bronwen for so many hours.

'Nonsense,' said Arthur, 'you can see her safely asleep before we start, and surely Emma can be trusted to look after her for once.'

Emma was so excited at the possibility of such a care, and at the idea of having the cot by her own bed-side for once, that it would have been cruel to disappoint her. My next line of defence—insufficiency of outfit—was useless, since my wedding-dress was all ready, even to the white shoes and stockings. I then abandoned myself to the fun of the thing.

There was the usual sport of Arthur struggling into his dress suit, hunting for his studs, and getting his tie right. It always seems to me that men take much longer than we do over such affairs. Then there was the never-fading joy of a drive in a hansom.

Gray's Inn had let itself go. It was a gloriously hot night, and the whole place seemed to me a fairyland of coloured lights and gaily dressed people, as we all danced and wandered into the garden. I knew several of Arthur's barrister friends, and didn't lack partners. But one of them certainly alarmed me. This was Master Lewis Coward, enormously tall, in court dress, and I believe an extremely important man, a Benchers no doubt. I soon forgot my nervousness, for he danced divinely.

## § 2

When August was upon us we had several invitations for the holidays to choose from. My special aunt, Tony, who had received weekly bulletins of the child's progress, was longing to see her playing about where her grandmother had played. Then Arthur's mother badly wanted her little grandchild. As on many another occasion I was torn between Cornwall and Wales, but decided on Wales, for I could see that Arthur was dying to show his possession to his people. No sooner had we settled on this than Yetta bore down upon us, and insisted on our going for a fortnight to a farm-house in Brecknock. Indeed she had taken the rooms, and would not hear of a refusal. As she rightly pointed out, it would be a shorter journey than to North Wales. So we agreed to go there first, then on to Aberdovey, leaving the visit to Reskaidinnick till the following year, when Bronwen would be able to run about in its spacious grounds.

Emma was to go 'down hoom' while we were away, and was quite able to see herself off. I gave her an addressed postcard to let me know that all was well. It came, bearing the simple message "rived safe". Our journey to Hay went off finely, and we were driven in the market cart up to Noyaddu

farm, high among the hills. As Yetta had designed, it was a complete holiday for me, and a glorious change for us all after living in a flat. Oats were being carried, wheat being reaped, fowls and ducks and geese continually having something done for them, vegetables, milk, cream, eggs . . . everything in plenty around us. We had drives among the 'Begwns' where we had lovely views of the Black Mountains, or short walks about the fields. Arthur had a day's fishing in the Wye, and brought home twenty-four trout and perch (caught with cock-a-bonddu and hazel fly); so we had trout for supper and perch for breakfast.

Bronwen made rapid advance in weight and length (which we now called height, since she could pull herself upright). But it is her human surroundings that are most vivid in my memory. M'Jane and Yetta had not even a nephew or niece to spend their affection upon, and let it all pour forth on Bronwen. Yetta made garments for her, and M'Jane played baby games with her. The farm was run by a young man and his two sisters, and their aged mother sat in the chimney-corner of the kitchen, too old for work, but not too old to play with Bronwen. I think for her it was a kind of renewal of life as she joined M'Jane in games of peep-bo, pat-a-cake, and blerum. This last performance never never fails to charm a baby. It is done by pouting the lips and flicking the finger up and down them rapidly, at the same time emitting a bubbling sound. Arthur had discovered this in pursuing his hobby of studying old Welsh poetry. A very early poet, named Taliessin, was found (like Moses and Romulus) in the water, and when rescued burst forth into poetry—although he was too much of a baby to be expected even to speak! He was clearly inspired! It was a miracle! A large number of wise bards were assembled, so that they might listen to his wisdom. They sat round the baby in a solemn circle, but all he did was to play blerum at them. It is of course a long story, but that is the short of it.

It was like parting with their own flesh and blood when M'Jane and Yetta said good-bye to Bronwen. We had a queer

cross-country railway journey from Hay to Aberdovey, involving a change at Moat Lane, but Bronwen appeared to delight in it all, and was received with rapture by her grandmother. This was not her first grandchild, but it was the first that she was allowed to have all to herself, without any intervening nurse. She had had plenty of sorrow in her life, and in my long acquaintance with her I never knew her so genuinely happy as when she was riding Bronwen on her foot or lap, and singing strange baby doggerel to her. Verses long forgotten came back as soon as she had the child to say them to.

*Betsy Brig had a pig, and it was double-jointed;  
She tried to make it dance a jig, and she was disappointed.*

At such quips Bronwen would laugh as though she saw the joke.

After much searching of the village we managed to hire a mail-cart, and with this we had triumphal walks through the one long straggling street of Aberdovey, where everybody knew us and came up to congratulate and admire. Since this street was open throughout its length to the sea, and faced south, Bronwen thrived faster than ever with the air and the sunshine. She had to be taken, too, by the toy railway up the valley to Aberllefeni, where endless friends and distant relations found striking likeness to her grandfather Hughes. In my heart I detected a likeness to her grandfather Thomas and her uncle Barnholt, whose sunny faces, always fresh in my memory, I longed to see living again.

We returned to London in grand style. Alfred's wife and three children with their nurse had been staying at Aberdovey, and a first-class carriage was engaged for us all. At Euston Alfred was there to meet his people, and Yetta to help us back to Ladbrooke Grove. Emma had returned and done all she could think of to make the flat look cosy.

Arthur and I always managed some little celebration for October 2nd, our common birthday. This year we decided to keep it on the preceding Saturday afternoon. We took Bronwen in her pram to browse among the shop-windows of

Notting Hill Gate. We got much pleasure from selecting all the articles of furniture and comforts for the home that it would be good to have, and still more satisfactory to do without. The only shop that it was difficult to get Arthur past was a combination of old curiosities and second-hand books. After enormous deliberation we actually set foot inside this shop. At least, Arthur did, while I stayed outside with Bronwen. I glimpsed him through the doorway as he examined in his short-sighted way pretty well everything on sale. At last he came out with a pair of brass candle-sticks.

‘One each for us,’ said I, ‘and now what for Bronwen?’

‘I’ve got an idea for her,’ said Arthur, ‘you see I have so little of her company, that I think it would be jolly if she could be more on a level with us at breakfast. Let’s buy her a high chair.’

This was a tremendous success. The chair put her on a level with us physically, and almost mentally, for as Arthur read out bits from the paper she would bang with her spoon on the front tray in disapproval, or laugh with approval. And the chair could be let down to a lower level during the day, and seemed safer in this position; but for the most part Bronwen preferred to crawl about and make her own discoveries. As I sat and watched her it occurred to me that I might as well make studies of her little curly toes and rounded legs and arms. These I could do fairly well after my assiduous copying from the old masters in the National Gallery. Then a bolder scheme rose in my mind. I hunted up my old sketch-books and saw that I could make a complete life of Christ in pictures, with the corresponding words from the Gospels underneath, and appropriate poetry from Milton, Herbert, Blake, Keble, and so on, to face them on the opposite page. It was all to be done in proper script, with illuminated capitals and borders, like a medieval manuscript. (Later on Ursula Wood and I carried out this idea together and got it published.)

When Christmas came our difficulty lay in consuming all the good things sent us. As usually happens, our friends were also being overloaded. However, M’Jane and Yetta came to

the rescue and agreed to come to dinner with us on Christmas Eve and help us eat an enormous turkey sent by Mr. Corner and reared at his own place. We could not say of it what the Cornish miner said of a goose—'The worst of it is that it's too much for one, and not enough for two.' So enormous was it that none of our pans would hold it, and Arthur and I had to dash out into Portobello Lane to buy an outsize pan. Time was of the essence, for it was going to take hours to cook. Our next trouble was to get it into the oven, but with some bending and squeezing we managed this at last. It turned out beautifully, and our only regret was that our visitors' appetites had very little effect on its size. They invited us to pay a return visit on Boxing Day. Some kind of high chair had been contrived for Bronwen, and she sat up to dinner and behaved beautifully. In the afternoon the grand drawing-room was at her disposal to crawl about as she liked; nothing was too sacred for her to handle and roll about. For a surprise at tea-time the two sisters had decorated a small Christmas-tree, with tiny gifts for Bronwen hung about it, and some candles (placed very safely) and bright-coloured balls among the branches. They were amply rewarded for their trouble by her ecstatic little cooings and laughter and thumps on the table.

Among our visitors that winter was Mrs. Keyes. Arthur came across her one day in Gray's Inn, and told her, of course, about Bronwen, and invited her to come over to see us. 'Come to tea next Saturday, and bring your husband.' A child is such a solvent of social difficulties that Mrs. Keyes was obviously quite at home as soon as she had Bronwen on her lap. She declared (and she could have said nothing more warming) that Bronwen was the living image of Mr. Barnholt. Her husband was too nervous to say much and confined his few remarks to admiration of the flat. As they were going he put a hand lovingly on the dark-brown dado of the passage. Drawing me aside he said in a low tone: 'The best of this, you see, Mum, is when you come home a bit late and that, and you lean against the wall, it doesn't show the mark.' How Arthur and I used to laugh afterwards about the uses of our

dado. I am pleased at the memory of that visit, for not many months later we heard that both Mrs. Keyes and her husband were ill. I went to see them in their room in one of those depressing model dwellings somewhere off Gray's Inn Road. The few comforts I had taken were nothing for people needing regular nursing, and I felt wretched and helpless about them, till I walked a Roman Catholic nun, and 'took hold'. 'It's all right,' said she, 'we come in twice a day and do all that is possible for them.' But she told me outside the door that there was no hope that either of them would live.

My dear old friend of college and 'bachelor diggings' time, Miss Rogers, made a pilgrimage to see me, bringing a quilt for the cot, made by herself. She expected to find me sobered into the staid married woman, and on her entrance behaved accordingly. But her wonted address soon burst out: 'Molly, you owl, you are making your poor infant as full of senseless laughter as yourself. Here, give her to me.' Whereupon Bronwen was promptly deposited on Miss Rogers's lap and taught sillier games than even I had indulged in.

Not a week passed without a visit from Mary Wood, my friend in every phase of life. 'How I wish you would be married, too,' I often said to her, and she as often replied, 'Find me a man exactly like Arthur, and I'll marry him at once.' She dropped in at any hour, and shared in any meal. Bronwen seemed almost her own child, and as godmother she used to ask frequently, 'When shall I step in with the ten commandments?' Her eldest sister and her husband were treated with rather more ceremony and asked to dinner in a proper way now and again. Such visits were always heartily enjoyed, but after one of them I noticed Arthur looking annoyed and fretful. This was so unusual that I said, 'What's the matter? Dinner all right, wasn't it?' 'Yes, everything went splendidly.' 'Well, then?' 'Oh I'm so ashamed,' said he, with a scowl, 'when people who have no child come here and see me with Bronwen.' I was astounded. 'But surely you're not ashamed of being seen with her on your knee?' 'Gracious, no. But I feel that I have had far more than my share—everything in life that I've most



wanted. I feel when any one childless comes here just as ashamed as a millionaire ought to be when he shows off his house to a chap who lives in a hovel.'

These particular guests were, I believe, perfectly happy in their life of painting, and needed no commiseration. But one of our visitors seemed to have endured far more than her share of the blows of fate. A career of sin or crime, romantic struggles with poverty, a pathetic illness—any such excitements would have been better than my Aunt Lizzie's meek endurance of a miserable married life and lonely widowhood. Perhaps her lack of endearing foibles was her most serious shortcoming. Her religion must have given her consolation; but it's a poor religion that adds no gaiety. The fact is that when she proposed to spend a fortnight with us I was a little alarmed at the idea, dreading a criticism of my domestic methods, or lack of them. When Bronwen was born she had written to me, 'Is not your heart singing with joy all day long?' Even this remark, astonishing from her, didn't make me aware of all the empty longing she must have endured. But when she came my eyes were opened. To me she seemed some one absolutely new. I never remember to have heard her laugh before, and now, as she tended Bronwen, complete bliss shone in her face. We had merry shoppings in Portobello Lane. Aunt Lizzie was trusted to wheel the pram and even to do the bathing and dressing. Bronwen would sit contentedly in her lap, exploring her watch-chain and brooch and buttons, looking up into her face with laughter at each fresh discovery. Having the child in her arms aroused old memories of her visits to us when we were children, and she regaled me with many an anecdote about my brothers: how little Tom, when only three, on hearing talk of an outing, managed to pull open a big drawer and drag out his best velvet suit; how she saved the new-born Charles's life when he was all but dead, and no doctor at hand; how little Barnholt greeted her once with urgent whisperings of 'Appoo pooun—appoo pooun' (interpreted by his mother as the glad news that there was to be apple pudding for dinner).

Another thing that we enjoyed together was the planning and preparing the dinner for the evening. Aunt Lizzie had had long experience both in choosing the best joints and vegetables to buy, as well as in the most appetizing ways to cook them. She knew sixteen different ways of doing potatoes, and how to make a proper Irish stew and a real curry. She was delighted at my eagerness in writing down all her hints in my manuscript cookery book.

Shortly before she arrived she had sent us her piano. She had now given up her teaching and said she no longer needed it. It was a grand acquisition for us, as I was able to practise again and accompany Arthur on his violin. Why is it that we are always more grateful for what people take from us than for what they give us? That piano is still with me and is a continual reminder of my aunt; but what I really thank her for is that fortnight in which she took Bronwen to her heart and was made happy.

### § 3

The great event in the spring of 1899 was Bronwen's birthday. As Arthur was leaving in the morning he gave her a toss in his arms and exclaimed, 'One year old! You are now riding on your two, as the Welsh say.' He promised to be sure to come home for tea.

I was expecting quite a birthday party. Mary Wood was unable to come, but sent a white silk frock for her god-daughter to look grand for the occasion. One of my Cornish cousins and an old college friend came with gifts of shoes. M'Jane and Yetta brought a large ball for Bronwen to roll about, and a blue silk sash to add to her white frock. With them came an old lady friend of theirs and, most valuable of all, a cousin, an eight-year-old boy. This little Wilfred laid aside his dignity, abandoned himself to the situation, and crawled about the floor with Bronwen. He not only chased the ball with her as though it were the one end in life, but also he made circles with his arms and arches with his legs for her

to crawl through to reach the ball, which she managed with crows of triumph.

This was my first serious tea-party, and it seemed quite a cheerful company with no lack of conversation. On the material side I had endeavoured to make it as grand as possible, with wedding-presents at last given a chance to be shown off. On a wooden tray, carved for me by Miss Russell, the secretary of Bedford College, I had laid out the blue tea-service given me by M<sup>r</sup> Jane. A home-made cake, and some more reliable bought ones, I had displayed on a table given me by Mrs. Bryant. These various objects provided more talk when it was most required, for one of the wedding-presents was creating a hold-up; this was an extremely ornamental brass kettle on a tall tripod stand, with a minute methylated spirit-lamp poised in the middle. It was the first occasion that had been important enough for its use, and I may add that it was the last. However, it had one advantage—it afforded great pleasure to Yetta, who knew exactly how to manage it, and took over the duty. Even under her control it looked like being a long time before the thing would actually come to the boil, so I slid out into the kitchen to engineer a preliminary pot of tea in order to set things going. Here I found Emma in a great state of agitation. I had sent her out to get some cream at a dairy close by. ‘Look mum,’ she cried, ‘what they’ve charged me a shilling for! Why, down hoom it would have been tuppence.’

The tea was poured out and cream added when Arthur breezed in, just in time to help Wilfred hand round the things. He felt obliged to remark that the birthday cake was a bit sad in the middle, but M<sup>r</sup> Jane immediately insisted that the best cakes are always sad in the middle. She also remarked when Bronwen’s white silk frock showed signs of devaluation from the floor exercise, ‘Never mind, Molly, it will wash like a rag.’ One would like to have M<sup>r</sup> Jane behind one at the Day of Judgement.

After this first milestone Bronwen forged ahead faster than ever. She could walk about by pushing a little chair in front of her. She would spring in my arms with gleeful cries of

'Mum, Mum', and welcome her father with 'Dad, Dad'. Her favourite word was 'up', the most expressive, I suppose, in the whole language, for joy or sorrow, life or death—we wake up and we break up. Often I heard Bronwen muttering it softly to herself before attempting the adventure; then she would pull herself upright to chair or couch and exclaim aloud 'Up', as triumphant as one who has achieved the Matterhorn.

Mary Wood's sister Ursula was then specializing in portraits, and suggested that she should do an oil-colour of Bronwen sitting in her high chair. This idea was particularly pleasing to Arthur, for his main vision of her was the little person thus seated at breakfast, 'chatting' to him in her own way. The portrait was a big business, necessitating several visits, and I wondered how Ursula managed it at all, for a lively baby can't pose, and has to be caught; but it turned out a great success.

The last days of May were upon us, and the warm spring sunshine was penetrating the flat, making us think of the coming summer and our long-promised visit to Cornwall, when we could show Bronwen to Tony, who would be sure to spoil her as she had spoilt all of us.

One evening my old headmistress and friend, Miss Bennett, came over to see us. Whether it was the effect of the baby or not I can't say, but she seemed to have shed her extreme propriety and to be as humanly foolish as our other visitors. She pronounced Bronwen to be the picture of health, and I said, 'She has not had an hour's illness since she was born.' It was pleasant to note that Miss Bennett lapsed, as we all do at times, into our ancient paganism. 'Oh, don't say that,' she immediately rejoined, 'you know how the Greeks felt that the gods are jealous of human happiness, and if they hear people boasting . . .' She broke off with a merry laugh and shake of the head.

It was two mornings later that I noticed a new accomplishment in the little creature lying in her cot by my side. She was gurgling to herself, and waving her little hands about, as though keeping time to some tune she had made. As I watched, the sounds changed to something like a moan, and I soothed her to sleep in my arms. We were troubled to see that she

hadn't her usual appetite for breakfast, and made no objection to being laid in her cot again. Arthur was distressed out of all proportion to such a slight indisposition; said he had a case in court or would stop at home; he would look in at the doctor's as he went by, to send him along; and I must be sure to send a wire if things were the least bit worse.

The doctor came at once, and thought there was a little stomach trouble; I was to give no food, but watch very carefully and send for him again if things didn't improve. I kept her in my arms all day, and she slept a little and smiled now and again, so that I felt hopeful that the trouble was passing. But at about four o'clock, when I thought she might swallow a little warm milk, she suddenly threw back her little head and began to gasp, and then to my horror she became unconscious. I told Emma to fetch the doctor, and then to go on to the post office and wire to the Temple, 'Come home as early as you can'. I made her repeat the message very carefully. There was no need to tell the poor girl to hurry. Half distracted when alone with the little one I made my way to the book-case, found Yetta's book of advice, and with one hand managed to see what to do in case of a fit—a hot bath was suggested. I went to the kitchen again but could do nothing about it till Emma's return. At last she appeared. The doctor was out, but would come as soon as he returned. In her anxiety she had wired the words to Arthur, 'Come at once'. This added to my anguish, for I knew how such a message would turn his heart to water. I ought to have remembered that whenever he was in a tight place all his wits were quickened, and that he would never spend an ounce of energy in mere emotion that might be useful in action. He did not come at once. Instead of that he tore round to his brother Alfred and brought him along with him. He also wired to Yetta, knowing her to be practical as well as ever ready to help. She was one of the governors of the London Hospital, and she wired for a nurse to be sent to me post-haste.

I pass over hurriedly, although I can recall them only too vividly, the details of those dreadful hours, as the fight for

the little life went on. The fit passed off, consciousness returned, and there came the blissful sound, the familiar little 'Mum, Mum'. It was a chance that did redeem all sorrows that ever I had felt.

The doctor and Alfred hung over the cot, with the nurse attending, keeping on with various spongings to keep the temperature down. Arthur and I stood by in the back-ground. After hours of watching Alfred whispered something to Arthur, and I was asked to go and fetch some necessity—I forget what. Only too thankful to be able to do something I went into the dining-room to find the thing required. I had barely got there when Arthur followed me into the room, shut the door, took me in his arms and dropped his head on my shoulder with the words: 'Let her go.'

The supreme phases of our life here—love and birth and death—each has the power of breaking down the barrier between us. We glory in the first two, in spite of their attendant pain. Why don't we acknowledge the majestic strength of the last? In that moment of anguish Arthur and I were one as we had never been before. But our poor human frames crack under the pain, and I hope I may never again see a man broken down with grief.

Since writing this short record I have realized the number of empty hearts that Bronwen filled with warmth and joy. And she did her little stroke all unawares . . . 'dear childe'.

### XIII

## *Three Sons*

**D**URING the following years three boys came to cheer us. Our natural anxiety about the health of the first gradually lessened as he got over every little ailment, and when his two brothers grew strong and lively our cares were thrown to the winds.

Life was so full of things to be done every moment that there was hardly room for worry to take root. Money was never plentiful, and we were glad to add a little to our coffer by some simple literary work. Through Mr. Corner's influence Arthur was given the job of writing the London Letter for the *Herefordshire Times* once a week. I was proud to be able to contribute a paragraph to this now and again, and I also wrote an occasional article for an educational paper, and did a great many reviews. All this made a pleasant change from domestic duties. I can give no orderly account of those strenuous years, but pull from my memory a few happenings that stand out, not for their importance, but for some oddity.

Londoners who live in flats are more distant with one another, if that is possible, than next-door neighbours. This is, no doubt, from the fear that the proximity would be unbearable if relations became at all strained. In the flat below us there came to live a young married couple, and after a while I ventured to call. I was well received, and as we chatted I learnt that a baby was expected. I immediately offered to lend the trestle-bed I had bought for my nurse, and a few other appurtenances that were now lying idle. At this the lady drew herself up and looked at me queerly, obviously suspecting me of some sinister motive. 'But,' said she, 'why should you, a perfect stranger, lend me these things?' I replied that I was an old Londoner and knew that such an offer from a neighbour was *ultra vires*, but that I was also a Cornish woman, and accus-



THE THREE BOYS IN 1918  
*From a pencil drawing by Ursula Wood*





tomed to a different code. Then we both laughed and became friends. So much so indeed that later on, when she was in difficulties after her nurse had left, I was actually allowed to go down and bath the baby for her. She little knew what delight it was to me to have such a task again.

That friendship was the only *rapprochement* afforded by the neighbourhood as such. We had endless visits from old friends, from relations passing through London, from my old schoolfellows, and from any friends of theirs who were within hail. But from mere neighbours, not one. There were several churches close by, but no clergyman called on us. People in flats are regarded as birds of passage, no doubt, devoid of souls, although we stayed seven years, and strange to say my friend below is still in her flat with husband and daughter.

One child in a flat is all right, but when we had two boys we felt that more space was wanted, and a bit of garden. We consulted Bradshaw to find some spot that was 'country' and yet provided with a few fast trains to town. Barnet filled the bill, and was specially attractive to me for its associations with my father and brothers, who used to take long walks from it as a base. The very name pleased me, as reminiscent of my brother Barnholt.

In those days Barnet was very different from what it is to-day. There were no trams, and the only bus was a little one-horse affair that plied between New and High Barnet—continually to be seen, but never on the spot when wanted. Where now you see road after road of new prim villas, of latest design, we enjoyed spacious open fields, country lanes, with over-hanging hedges, and enticing foot-paths. Our house was an old one, overlooking a park with a large pond and great spreading trees. A gate at the bottom of our garden led into the grounds of our landlord, a kindly old fellow who loved the company of one of our small boys as he pottered among his fruit trees and vegetables.

Kindly, yes, and so was every one else. Accustomed all my life to the aloofness of Londoners I was amazed at the immediate friendliness of the Barnet people. The vicar came

quite soon, and of course a doctor was necessary when our third boy arrived. Both the vicar's wife and the doctor's wife were of that charmingly indiscreet type that is the despair of their husbands and the joy of their neighbours.

Another rich vein of friendship was the railway journey to town. Arthur was soon one of a coterie who took the same express every morning. He went third-class, but it was soon usual for some of the richer business men to forsake their first-class carriage and join those whose purses were lighter and conversation brighter.

What with the vicar and the doctor, our quite contingent neighbours, and the wives of Arthur's train companions, I soon had plenty of friends. Paying calls, however, was not in my line, and I found it expedient to build up a character for eccentricity.

'You promised to come and see me,' said a friend I met in the road, 'but you have never been.'

'Ah,' said I, 'but then I never meant what I said. What I like is for people to drop in on me just when they feel inclined and never expect me to call on them.'

She was too astonished to be offended, and fell in pleasantly with the idea. So did many others, and hardly a day passed without some one popping in, to exchange notes about a cookery recipe, to play with the boys, or join in with anything we were doing.

The days were full enough, for although I had a servant for housework I never had a nurse. This was not so much from lack of means as from my preference for looking after the boys myself. There was no kindergarten at hand, and even if there had been one I should not have cared to send them to it. Kindergartens are fine institutions, but those I had seen gave me the impression of too much dainty attention to the children, too much absorption in their important work on the part of the teachers, too much of the 'Isn't he sweet?' and 'Isn't she a darling?' My ideal was more of a rough-and-tumble environment. A married servant of my mother's said to her once, in solemn tones, 'You know, mum, children *thrive*

in the dirt.' Mother perceived the big principle underlying this statement, and determined that her own children should be perfectly clean once a day, and beyond that might get as dirty as they liked.

Our new surroundings were splendid for such an ideal. There was an attic at the top of the house for the boys' own, to set out their train lines, build with their bricks, and romp as they liked. There was a garden to grub in and trees to climb. I didn't want to make them nervous, and I hope it will be counted to me for righteousness that when I heard a 'Hullo, mother!' from the top branches of the fir, or saw a boy walking along the perilous edge of the garden wall, I went indoors to suffer in silence, often muttering to myself Hagar's 'Let me not see the child die'.

Not far away was a pond, containing minnows and sticklebacks, and one afternoon a little figure appeared slung about with every appliance for catching them and a glass jar for bringing them home. 'I'm going fishing, mother,' he announced. 'Won't you have your tea before you go?' I asked. 'No; fishermen do not care to eat.' The right spirit, I thought.

Casualties were frequent to both bodies and garments, but nothing serious. Falls downstairs, grazed knees, cut fingers, and bruises were little accounted of. A great triangular tear in knickerbockers would be shown me, with 'It won't matter, will it, mother? It'll soon mend, won't it?' In such a case as this I found one of my neighbourly visitors extremely useful. 'Oh, do let me mend it, Mrs. Hughes,' and of course I hadn't the heart to refuse her.

Materials of all kinds were in constant demand for operations in the attic. String, empty bobbins, pieces of wood, bits of cloth, sheets of brown paper—but commonest of all was the query, 'Have you got a box, mother?' 'What size do you want?' 'Oh, just a box.' I have not yet cured myself of hoarding every box that comes to the house.

Naturally I tried to give the boys some serious teaching, and soon found that very little actual sitting down to it was required. At least on my part. Each boy, after reaching the

responsible age of four, was set down to some morning task. But any reasonable outside demand was permitted. Thus, one morning the second boy was a very long time coming home after seeing his father off at the station. 'Where have you been?' said I, for he looked rather the worse for wear, although radiant. 'I been delivering with Payne,' was the proud reply. Payne was our greengrocer, and the little chap had been staggering to people's doors with greens and potatoes. I guessed that he had learnt as much in that way as in his 'lessons' at home.

These lessons chiefly consisted in the boys doing something by themselves while I was busy in the kitchen. Results or difficulties were brought to me wherever I happened to be. Drawing of some kind was the basis of nearly everything. Thus for starting reading I had made a packet of cards, drawn an object on each and printed its name below; so the word (as it would look in a book) became familiar long before the separate letters were distinguished. Then it could be copied, and there was the beginning of writing. The transition to real reading was made easy through Mary Wood, who brought something to help me every time she came. Among her gifts were two books of priceless value. The story of *Little Black Sambo* was read aloud to the boys, soon known by heart, acted in the garden, and then read by themselves—such words as 'beautiful' and 'umbrella' (impossible to teach on any rational system) being soon recognized in any context. The other book was a little folk's edition of *Alice in Wonderland*. By the time that these, and *Peter Rabbit*, were mastered there was no more anxious bother about reading. I have seen countless books of 'systems' for teaching children to read, and have come to the conclusion that the only thing is to give them a book (with some good illustrations) containing a story that they *want* to know.

In spite of Mr. Harding's warning I followed his ideas about the beginnings of arithmetic. With the boys' assistance I painted red spots on postcards, arranged as on playing-cards, so that a five, a six, a seven, and so on could be quickly intuited.

A few of these would be dealt out and added up, such words as twenty, thirty, and forty coming as happily surprising new words. One day the glad news was reported to me in the kitchen, 'Mother, I've got to *tenty*!' That was the moment to acquire the new word 'hundred'.

Quite another aid to realizing number and size came in an unexpected way. The gift of a very large box of plain bricks gave endless pleasure for building purposes. The well-made pieces of hard wood varied in size from a cubic inch to lengths of ten inches, adapting themselves to being railway lines or men-of-war with rising decks or houses or temples, while the little cubes could pose as people. It was only as I watched the play that I perceived their further value. 'Hand me a six,' one busy builder would cry. 'Can't find a six, will a four and a two do?' The actual handling of the different sizes seemed to me valuable, and I encouraged a pride in putting all the bricks in the box before bed, for the mere fitting in had its advantages. The boys are now scattered far and wide, but those bricks are still intact.

I don't know whether the love of measurement is common in children, but the boys seemed to have a passion for it, and the eldest enjoyed even angles and the use of a protractor. I told him one day to draw any number of triangles he liked, all shapes and sizes; then to measure the angles in each very carefully and to add the results. I went about my own business, and after a long time came the surprised report: 'It's so funny, mother, they all come out the same!'

Occasionally it was one of the boys who set a problem to me, and I was not always equal to it. One day I was at the sink washing up the tea-things, when the youngest approached with, 'Mother, who *is* the Holy Ghost?' I confess that I temporized: 'I'm busy just now, darling, but another time. . . .' He ran off contented and forgot his difficulty. Another day the middle boy, chancing to be out with me alone, asked me what electricity was. Here I felt on surer ground, and enlarged on the subject at some length, not a little pleased at the silent attention of my audience. I was rewarded with, 'Oh

well, when Dad comes home I'll ask him, and he'll splain it properly.'

Arthur had plenty of explanations to make, for my knowledge of mathematics or engineering was never regarded as reliable. It was the early days of motor-cars, and they were rare enough for us to make a game of counting them on the Great North road; one boy kept a little note-book for recording their numbers. On one grand afternoon we had the bliss of seeing King Edward go by. On another hardly less exciting occasion we saw an aeroplane over our fields for the first time. It used to delight me to see Arthur with one boy on his knee, and the other two hanging on his shoulders, while he drew diagrams and explained what the inside of a locomotive was busy about, what the different wheels of a watch were for, how a motor-car worked, and how a plane managed to get up.

In the matter of geography I was sketchy, being content with getting the boys to know where important places were, and to be fond of maps. With the aid of picture postcards we got on fairly well. The counties of England and Wales, and the countries of Europe were learnt without trouble by means of puzzles, sensibly made so that each county or country was a separate piece. I would hear, 'What's become of Devon? It's that nice fat one,' or 'Find Northampton for me; it's a long one.' Rutland was troublesome, in constant danger of being lost.

As for grammar I was on velvet. When I had books to review there had fallen into my hands *The Child's Picture Grammar*, a gem by Rosamund Praeger, gloriously illustrated in colour. In most schools there is much agony inflicted on teachers and taught by trying to cope, in junior classes, with case and gender, voice, mood, and tense—many of them things that the English language has wisely thrown off. All that a healthy child needs to know is the business of each part of speech. Now this book depicted them in anthropomorphic style, with comic illustrations and a story, so that they became personal friends of the boys. The page on pronouns showed two boys fighting, while their grown-up nouns were having a

rest. They had got confused as to which noun they each represented. In this way the useful slogan was learnt—'One pronoun, one job'.

Our literary efforts were neither exalted in style nor improving in tone. The boys certainly delighted in the poems of Elizabeth Turner and of Jane and Ann Taylor, but not for their moral value. They never tired of the sailor lads of Bristol City, of the Pied Piper, the Jackdaw of Rheims, the Pobble who had no toes, and the Bishop of Rumtfoo. I would hear scraps of these being chanted about the house: 'Blow your pipe there till you burst', 'They were 'educed to one split pea', 'Time, my Christian friend.' Not but what I tried to instil some verses of deeper value. But it was no use; I saw that it was merely 'filling the kettle with the lid on', and soon learnt how foolish it is to press lovely poems on young people before they can naturally appreciate them, and thus deprive them of the shock of delight that awaits them later on. It is better never to hear a fine piece of literature at all than to hear it with distaste. However, there was one supreme poem that I couldn't resist giving the boys—*The Ancient Mariner*. They enjoyed the mystery and weirdness of the story, and I did not require it to be learnt by heart, but now and again I would hear scraps of it being muttered, such as 'And every soul, it passed me by, like the whizz of my cross-bow'. Last thing before bedtime I used to 'read a chapter' to them. I chose something soporific rather than serious, and it was usually an episode from Uncle Remus, or *Rudder Grange*, or *The Diary of a Pilgrimage*, all of which the boys knew well enough to join in with the story here and there. But I tried to make up the deficiency of more solid stuff in another way.

Unless the weather was absolutely forbidding, every afternoon was spent in a walk. Hadley Woods provided a glorious playground for exploring glades, climbing, jumping, hiding, gathering blackberries, collecting chestnuts, or watching the various kinds of trains going by on the Great Northern. But we had a walk to and from the woods through rather dull streets. The youngest boy was in and out of a mail-cart, and



quite content, but the other two were bored on the way out and tired on the way back. So to ease the situation I used to tell stories, on the true Chaucerian model. As may be supposed, I was frequently gravelled for matter. To 'tell a story' in an isolated way is difficult when the demand is continual. A verse of Keats came to my mind—'All lovely tales that we have heard or read, an endless fountain of immortal drink'—I began to explore the various sources of good tales that I knew, and found them indeed endless. To save the bother of selection I assigned a different day to each source: thus, on Mondays I told a Bible story, on Tuesdays a story from English history, on Wednesdays one from Roman history, on Thursdays one from the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, and on Fridays a fairy story or a Norsk legend or a fable from Aesop. Of course I had to enlarge and embroider to make the stories last out. I remember taking the length of Station Road to describe the gorgeous home of the rich young ruler—his horses, his grand dinners, his purple clothes, his apes and peacocks (these last borrowed from Solomon). The boys saw that it was no light thing to give up all these jolly things to go and help among the very grubby poor people that he could see around Jesus. It was after some such story that the middle boy said, 'What happens to us when we die, mother?' 'Nobody knows,' I replied. 'Ah,' said he, 'I expect Jesus is keeping it secret, so that we shall have a nice little surprise.'

I suppose to children there are few things to equal the pleasure of surprise, especially the surprise of an unopened parcel. Christmas was the grand time for this, when every present was put away until the appointed moment. It was a day or two before this feast when the middle boy said to me, 'I hope you will die on Christmas Day, mother.' 'Well,' said I, 'it's not very likely that I shall, why do you want me to?' 'I want to see the blood coming out.' 'Oh, but you know people often die without the blood coming out, you can't rely on it.' 'Oh well, then, never mind, don't bother about it.'

Of course, the boys had many picture books, and no doubt made up strange stories for themselves from them. Their

father arrived one Saturday afternoon with an enormous volume of Hogarth. He had picked it up at a sale and had great trouble in dragging its weight home to the door. It is only when I am in extremely high spirits that I can bear to look at those terrible satires. I was surprised to find how often the youngest boy demanded to have it put on the floor for him, and would apparently revel in it. Idly one day I said, 'Which picture do you like best?' He said at once, 'Oh this one, mother,' and turned to Hogarth's realistic depiction of a man being drawn and quartered.

Home-made picture books provided a useful pastime. I got some blank scrap-books, and the boys pasted into them any odd pictures they could collect. One book was kept for history, another for geography, and another for illustrations of the Bible. All this involved much cutting and messing with gum. The house was never very tidy. One morning a neighbour looked in and expressed astonishment at finding me busily engaged in putting everything to rights. 'I read in the paper yesterday,' said I, 'about a woman who was murdered, and it said that the police found her cupboards and drawers in great disorder. So I thought I had better tidy up a bit, in case I get murdered.' 'Don't you worry,' said my kindly neighbour, 'the drawers will all get untidy again before you are murdered.'

While I was a source of amusement to the people of Barnet, Arthur was a pillar of strength. All sorts of troubles and family difficulties were brought to him, and he never failed to do something or other to help, even if it was only by his calm and sympathetic way of getting to the kernel of the trouble. On one occasion a neighbour's son had got into disgrace, on another a neighbour's daughter had been found dead in a pond, on another a husband's feelings were acutely hurt because his wife (who was known to drink a little in private) had been refused communion. In all these troubles Arthur managed to help in some way. The vicar was a young man, very enthusiastic about introducing high church practices. Some hot-headed protestants became full of righteous indigna-

tion, held meetings and 'exposed' his carryings-on in the local press. He walked about the street in cassock and biretta, and was accused of wearing a mitre! Arthur said he neither knew nor cared what the vicar chose to put on, but he would not have him hounded by people who seldom, if ever, entered the church. So he attended one of these indignation meetings, and let his fury have full scope. The effect was almost magical, for what Arthur said *went*. He could never forget the bitterness of the nonconformists in Wales towards the Church schools, and how the children were denied proper equipment and even sufficient coal. 'If I were on the local council there,' he would growl, 'I would get things altered.' 'But what could you do,' I objected, 'if you were the only churchman there?' 'Do? Why, I'd raise hell, and be carried out of every meeting.'

And indeed the objections to our vicar came entirely from the nonconformists in the parish, who, of course, had no interest in the church, but asserted their right as parishioners to fight for the Lord by stopping Romish practices. It was during this local warfare that Tom came to stay with us, and was all agog to see what the practices were like. 'D'you call this high?' he whispered to me in a disgusted tone during the service, 'In Middlesbrough we should call it *low*!'

Tom was a grand companion for the boys, and the youngest sat on his knee whenever possible. When I protested, the little chap maintained that 'there was nowhere else to sit'. This was in a field, where, as Tom said, there were all the home counties to sit in. In church, of course, he had to behave in more seemly fashion and confine his energies to making a train of the hassocks. Tom had given each boy a new sixpence, and one of them had placed it on the pew for happy contemplation through the sermon. When the bag came round Tom made him put the sixpence in, explaining to the agonized child that it must go in because it had been so openly advertised. I think, however, that another one was soon found.

Sunday was never a dull day, for we had Arthur at home for walks or games or reading or singing. Moreover, I instituted a 'Sunday box', never opened except on Sunday. In

this I had gradually accumulated a number of diminutive toys, which could be employed in endless combinations. The only one who loathed Sunday was our Welsh terrier, who used to lie down in limp dejection when he heard the church bell; but he cheered up in the afternoon when a long walk over the fields to Cockfosters gave him glorious chances of getting as muddy as he liked.

We never pressed any religious instruction on the boys, merely answering their questions as sincerely as we could, as they arose. I had always felt the truth of Jean Paul Richter's remark that children imbibe religion best by noting their parent's attitude to it—no matter what is taught or preached in church. I sometimes wondered what the boys made of the curious prayers and hymns and sermons, but said nothing. Once when the Athanasian Creed was being intoned I observed the youngest boy following intently with his book. Presently he pulled me down to whisper in my ear, 'Mother, what awful rubbish this is.'

The religious occasion that we most enjoyed was the Welsh service at St. Paul's on the eve of St. David's Day. Arthur was on the committee for organizing it, and so we always had good reserved seats. The cathedral was packed to overflowing by people who had come up from Wales on purpose for it. The band of the Welsh Guards led the music, and the singing of *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* (which the Dean and Chapter probably thought was a hymn) was the most tremendous thing I have ever heard. The whole service and the sermon were in Welsh, conducted by Welsh clergymen from various parts. But the cathedral vastness needs some management, so the final blessing delivered from the distance of the altar was entrusted to one of the canons, coached up in the Welsh for the occasion. Arthur had been busy over arrangements for this festival when he died—a few days before. I was told that they played the Dead March in *Saul*.

Long years ago Arthur had confided to me his secret ambition to get into Parliament. We both knew that our limited means would forbid it for ages, and probably for ever.

Imagine my excitement, therefore, when one evening he came home with the news that he was to fight Lloyd George at the coming election. 'Mind you,' said he, 'there's not the ghost of a chance that I shall get in.' 'Never mind,' said I, 'you will have the fight. But why do they trouble to put up a candidate when it's hopeless?' 'Because if there was no opposition, Lloyd George would be free to go about supporting other candidates. It's worth the money to the party merely to keep him out of action.'

And a grand time we all had. Arthur was provided with a car and a chauffeur (a luxury in those days) and was driven about the Division at hot speed from one meeting to another. Every morning came a letter from him about hecklings and even escapes from physical attacks, and when the elections began we became very busy at home. We had a large map of England spread out on the table, and whenever a result was published we stuck a little flag in the place—bits of red and blue paper on pins. Moreover, we decorated the mail-cart with flags and made a brave show through the streets of Barnet. Some of our many friends were of the opposite colour, which added piquancy to our encounters. Of course Arthur was defeated, but he had successfully kept Lloyd George on the hop, and this had given him immense satisfaction.

Not long after this it was my turn to have a jaunt from home. An advertisement of excursions on the Great Western caught my eye. One could go to Penzance and back for fifteen shillings. I had never been in an excursion train in my life, and believed them to be all that was miserable and degrading. Still—only fifteen shillings for a chance to see Cornwall once again, and Tony. I asked Arthur what he thought about it. He immediately wanted me to travel properly by the ordinary train. But I pointed out that I couldn't leave the boys for more than two nights, and that it would be great fun to see what an excursion was like, and that anyhow I would go like that or not at all. Strange to say, it was the easiest journey to Cornwall I ever had. Arthur saw me off from Paddington at 8 p.m.; there were only two other passengers in my compart-

ment and I went immediately to sleep. 'Where are we?' said I when I woke. 'Newton Abbot,' was the reply.

With what rapture I took that early morning walk from Camborne station down to Reskadinnick. Every turn of the road brought to mind some jolly incident of my childhood, some dearly loved person. As I went along the drive, where every tree seemed an old friend, I had again that uncanny feeling of being uncertain that my surroundings were real, or that I had any business there—just as I had felt when alone in New York. The house at last! The same as ever. I went round by the side way, through into the poultry yard, and there by a hen-coop, leaning upon her stick, stood Tony. I stopped, and she looked at me in a dazed way, and then exclaimed, 'Why! 'tis Molly!'

When I see cheap excursions advertised on posters I often wonder whether they are going to provide people who are hard up with some such golden opportunity as I had—a chance to see some one whom they will never see again. The bliss of that day to Tony and me is indescribable. I followed her about as I did when a child, helped her with little jobs, or just sat with her and talked. I made her go to bed early and brought up her supper to her.

'Arthur has sent you a little medicine for your rheumatism,' said I, as I took from my bag a large-size medicine bottle, 'and it's got to be taken in hot water, and lemon and sugar may be added. I've brought up a kettle and everything.'

'Dear Arthur!' said she, 'how good of him, and I feel to want some quite at once.'

As she sipped it lovingly I told her that it was part of a gift of superb whisky given to Arthur by a grateful client.

For as far back as I can remember it had been her custom to read a psalm at bed-time. A large-print volume of them lay by her side. Never did she stray into the rosy paths of the New Testament, but found a companion for every mood, from gaiety to black despair, in her 'royal treasury' of the Psalms.

'Which one shall I read to you to-night?' said I, picking up the book.

'Well, it isn't its turn, dear, but do let's have the hundred and fourth. I love to think of God feeding all the creatures, the wild asses quenching their thirst and the lions roaring after their prey.'

'I believe you know it by heart,' said I. She nodded and smiled, and before I had reached the verse about the lions she was peacefully asleep.

The next morning I had to start very early, but she was up to give me breakfast, and my last memory of her is that brave figure, crippled by age and rheumatism, standing in the garden to wave a last farewell to me as I turned the bend into the drive.

On my reaching home, I found that the boys had had a good time in the servant's care, and that Arthur had been adequately fed. When I recounted my unnecessary anxiety to Mrs. Macbeth, a neighbour with boys of her own, she told me how she had learnt not to worry: 'When Ronald was four years old I had to go to town for the day, and, of course, I left full instructions for his care—fire to be guarded—no going near the pond—no window to be open at the bottom—you know the sort of thing. But while I was in full career of shopping a cold fear seized me—what if Ronald should go playing with the mangle and crush his finger? So I hunted for a post office (no easy thing in London!) and telegraphed home, "Keep Ronald from mangle", and then went back to my shopping with complete peace of mind. When the door was opened on my return I was told that everything was all right, but that there was a telegram for me. Like an idiot, I had addressed it "Macbeth", and of course it hadn't been opened.'

There was soon to be a treat for all of us, and it would be hard to say which enjoyed it most, Arthur or I or the boys. As I opened the door to Arthur one evening he exclaimed, 'I've had a letter from Bourne!' 'Well,' said I, 'that's common enough, what is there to be excited about?' 'But it was posted in London. He and his wife and little girl are actually in England—landed yesterday—and are now at an hotel. I've told him to bring them here at once. We can put them up, can't we?'

Yes, indeed, there was room for all. Bourne was an old and dear friend, and I feared him not, but I was rather nervous of Mrs. Bourne, lest she should be too grand for our simple household. I learnt afterwards that she was nervous of me lest I should be clever. Both illusions were dispelled at our first meal, for as she helped me place the children round the table and dispense the food, I announced, 'Now if anybody wants anything he must just scream.'

All lessons were discarded at once. The youngest boy had been engaged in copying out the national anthem, and left it at the stage of 'Long live our nob'. Hilda, the little girl, came in age near the younger boys. She was an only child, brought up very carefully and properly, and her delight was intense when she found that she could get as muddy and untidy as she liked, without any reprimand. She was astonished, too, that bruises and grazed knees had no remedies applied, but were expected to heal up of themselves. This taste of freedom was intoxicating to her. When the boys asked her if she was a South African native she denied it a little indignantly, but had to admit that she had been born there, and then the misunderstanding was cleared up. She was an eager listener to stories, and I remember how much she liked Tolstoi's *What Men Live By*.

The charge of the four children fell to me most of the time, for Mrs. Bourne had a great deal of shopping to do in London. Her husband had business of his own in town, and he used to take her up with him, deposit her in Swan & Edgar's or Peter Robinson's, or some similar emporium, with instructions to take a cab as soon as she came out to the next place she wanted to visit. Now she was a perfect stranger to London and was so completely dazed that she drove to the station to get back to Barnet as soon as she decently could. I soon gathered that all she experienced of a London street was the bit of pavement between the shop-door and the cab.

'The way to see London,' said I, 'is to walk about and press your nose against the window-panes, or get on the top of a bus. Let's all go up together to-morrow, and I'll show you how to enjoy it. What shop have you got to visit next?'



'I was recommended to a shop in St. Paul's Churchyard, but of course there must be some mistake. The idea of a shop in a churchyard!'

'There's nothing funny in that,' said I. 'There are lots of shops in it. You shall see.'

She and I and all the children had a grand prowling about the City, into St. Paul's and along the alleys and by the dignified hidden dwellings close by.

'You think shops in a churchyard are funny,' said I, 'what do you say to a church called St. Andrew's by the Wardrobe?'

By this time Mrs. Bourne was prepared for any oddity, and we went down Carter Lane to a little turning called Wardrobe Place where old trees are growing out of a paved yard, the remains of the garden of the ancient house called the King's Wardrobe. Then we went on to see St. Andrew's, and then to Blackfriars to see the river. And on the top of a bus back to King's Cross we saw no end of other things.

As their fathers went off to town after breakfast every day the children saw little of them till the week-end. But Arthur delighted Hilda by going to kiss her good-night; she seemed like his little daughter. She was tremendously impressed with his top hat—a thing to which she was quite unused.

We grown-ups had plenty of fun in the evenings, talking of old times, telling new stories, and arguing far into the night. Among all our good neighbours in Barnet there was no one of Bourne's mental calibre, and I could see how refreshing to Arthur was this first-rate talk with accompaniment of fire and pipe.

When Sunday came we set off for church. Feeling a little anxious as to how the vicar's 'practices' might strike Mrs. Bourne, I asked her whether the church in Capetown was a high one. 'Not very, I'm afraid,' she replied, and added more hopefully, 'but they are thinking of building a tower.' I had no more concern on this point. The children filed into our usual pew, and I felt proud of my increased family. I didn't notice that when the boys placed their hats neatly down in front of them Hilda followed suit and placed her little blue

cap alongside. Presently the verger touched my arm and whispered, 'Is that a little girl? Would you ask her to put her hat on?' Obviously the Bournes were not great churchgoers, and Hilda had some difficulty in keeping her end up when she was questioned by the eldest boy as to her favourite feast-day, her favourite psalm, her favourite hymn, and so on. She only knew of Christmas, of 'The Lord is my shepherd,' and 'Onward Christian soldiers,' but as these were quite a natural choice her ignorance of any others was not observed, and it is only lately that she has told me of how awkward she felt. When it came to putting together the puzzle of the English counties the boys were genuinely shocked at her not knowing any of them, not even Cornwall from Durham. She was too polite to retaliate with some searching questions about Africa. Indeed, she was perfectly happy to be told everything as they all rampaged about the house and garden and woods.

'What a darling little girl she is,' said Arthur to me when they had gone, 'how I wish that our boys were better behaved. I feel quite ashamed when I see other children so polite and obedient—their cousins, for instance, how good they are.'

'Yes, of course they are,' said I. 'When their favourite uncle comes to see them they are gracious hosts, and when they come here they are gracious guests. No father ever really sees other people's children. Let's hope they're naughty enough in the bosom of their own family.'

'Hope? Why should we hope they are naughty?'

'Well, if children always did exactly as they were told, were always unthinkingly obedient, how could the world advance? And how dull it would be. Tell me now, did you ever do anything really bad when you were a boy?'

'I often used to go blind with rage.'

'That's all right. It's better to have a temper to curb than to have none at all.'

'But sometimes it was ugly enough. Once, when Llewelyn was asked to a party and I wasn't, I filled his boots with water. It's nothing to laugh at, I've always been ashamed of it.'

'Anything else?'

‘Well, once I played truant from our little school. Off I started to get a whole long time to myself fishing in our stream at Corris. It was just the day for it—fish rising beautifully, and I got some fine trout.’

I noticed as he spoke that his eyes were shining at the recollection of that day, and I added, ‘There you are! An act of insubordination and a joy for ever.’

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